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NATIONAL TALES.

BY

THOMAS HOOD,

AUTHOR OF "WHIMS AND ODDITIES."

I am to speak of universal occurrences, with some misfortunes in part, and partly leaning to matters of love. *Philostratus.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

WILLIAM H. AINSWORTH, OLD BOND STREET.

MDCCCXXVII.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

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PREFACE.

It has been decided, by the learned Malthusians of our century, that there is too great an influx of new books into this reading world. An apology seems therefore to be required of me, for increasing my family in this kind; and by twin volumes, instead of the single octavos which have hitherto been my issue. But I concede not to that modern doctrine, which supposes a world on short allowance, or a generation without a ration. There is no mentionable overgrowth likely to happen in life or literature. Wholesome checks are ap-

pointed against overfecundity in any species. Thus the whale thins the myriads of herrings, the teeming rabbit makes Thyestean family dinners on her own offspring, and the hyenas devour themselves. Death is never backward when the human race wants hoeing; nor the Critic to thin the propagation of the press. The surplus children, that would encumber the earth, are thrown back in the grave—the superfluous works, into the coffins prepared for them by the trunk-maker. Nature provides thus equally against scarcity or repletion. There are a thousand blossoms for the one fruit that ripens, and numberless buds for every prosperous flower. Those for which there is no space or sustenance drop early from the bough; and even so these leaves of mine will pass away, if there be not patronage extant, and to spare, that may endow them with a longer date.

I make, therefore, no excuses for this production, since it is a venture at my own peril. The serious character of the generality of the

stories, is a deviation from my former attempts, and I have received advice enough, on that account, to make me present them with some misgiving. But because I have jested elsewhere, it does not follow that I am incompetent for gravity, of which any owl is capable; or proof against melancholy, which besets even the ass. Those who can be touched by neither of these moods, rank lower indeed than both of these creatures. It is from none of the player's ambition, which has led the buffoon by a rash step into the tragic buskin, that I assume the sadder humour, but because I know from certain passages that such affections are not foreign to my nature. During my short lifetime, I have often been as "sad as night," and not like the young gentlemen of France, merely from wantonness. It is the contrast of such leaden and golden fits that lends a double relish to our days. A life of mere laughter is like music without its bass; or a picture (conceive it) of vague

unmitigated light; whereas the occasional melancholy, like those grand rich glooms of old Rembrandt, produces an incomparable effect and a very grateful relief.

It will flatter me, to find that these my Tales can give a hint to the dramatist—or a few hours' entertainment to any one. I confess, I have thought well enough of them to make me compose some others, which I keep at home, like the younger Benjamin, till I know the treatment of their elder brethren, whom I have sent forth (to buy corn for me) into Egypt.

> " To be too confident is as unjust
> In any work, as too much to distrust;
> Who, from the rules of study have not swerv'd,
> Know begg'd applauses never were deserv'd.
> We must submit to censure, so doth he
> Whose hours begot this issue; yet, being free,
> For his part, if he have not pleased you, then,
> In this kind he 'll not trouble you again."

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY.

"Let the clouds scowl, make the moon dark, the stars extinct, the winds blowing, the bells tolling, the owls shrieking, the toads croaking, the minutes jarring, and the clock striking twelve."—*Old Play.*

THE

SPANISH TRAGEDY.

INSTEAD of speaking of occurrences which accidentally came under my observation, or were related to me by others, I purpose to speak of certain tragical adventures which personally concerned me; and to judge from the agitation and horror which the remembrance, at this distance of time, excites in me, the narrative shall not concede in interest to any creation of fiction and romance. My hair has changed from black to grey since those events occurred:—strange, and wild, and terrible enough for a dream, I wish I could believe

that they had passed only on my pillow; but when I look around me, too many sad tokens are present to convince me that they were real,—for I still behold the ruins of an old calamity!

To commence, I must refer back to my youth, when, having no brothers, it was my happy fortune to meet with one who, by his rare qualities and surpassing affection, made amends to me for that denial of nature. Antonio de Linares was, like myself, an orphan, and that circumstance contributed to endear him to my heart; we were both born, too, on the same day; and it was one of our childish superstitions to believe, that thereby our fates were so intimately blended that on the same day also we should each descend to the grave. He was my schoolmate, my playfellow, my partner in all my little possessions; and as we grew up, he became my counsellor, my bosom friend, and adopted brother. I gave to his keeping the very keys of my heart, and with a like sweet confidence he

entrusted me even with his ardent passion for my beautiful and accomplished cousin, Isabelle de ****; and many earnest deliberations we held over the certain opposition to be dreaded from her father, who was one of the proudest, as well as poorest nobles of Andalusia. Antonio had embraced the profession of arms, and his whole fortune lay at the point of his sword; yet with that he hoped to clear himself a path to glory, to wealth, and to Isabelle. The ancestors of the Condé himself had been originally ennobled and enriched by the gratitude of their sovereign, for their signal services in the field; and when I considered the splendid and warlike talents which had been evinced by my friend, I did not think that his aspirations were too lofty or too sanguine. He seemed made for war; his chief delight was to read of the exploits of our old Spanish chivalry against the Moors; and he lamented bitterly that an interval of profound peace allowed him no opportunity of signalizing his prowess and his valour

against the infidels and enemies of Spain. All his exercises were martial; the chase and the bull-fight were his amusement, and more than once he engaged as a volunteer in expeditions against the mountain banditti, a race of men dangerous and destructive to our enemies in war, but the scourge and terror of their own country in times of peace. Often his bold and adventurous spirit led him into imminent jeopardy; but the same contempt of danger, united with his generous and humane nature, made him as often the instrument of safety to others. An occasion upon which he rescued me from drowning, confirmed in us both the opinion that our lives were mutually dependant, and at the same time put a stop to the frequent railleries I used to address to him on his wanton and unfair exposures of our joint existences. This service procured him a gracious introduction and reception at my uncle's, and gave him opportunities of enjoying the society of his beloved Isabelle; but the stern disposition of the Condé was too

well known on both sides to allow of any more than the secret avowal of their passion for each other. Many tears were secretly shed by my excellent cousin over this cruel consideration, which deterred her from sharing her confidence with her parent; but at length, on his preparing for a journey to Madrid, in those days an undertaking of some peril, she resolved, by the assistance of filial duty, to overcome this fear, and to open her bosom to her father, before he departed from her, perhaps for ever.

I was present at the parting of the Condé with his daughter, which the subsequent event impressed too strongly on my memory to be ever forgotten. It has been much disputed whether persons have those special warnings, by dreams or omens, which some affirm they have experienced before sudden or great calamity; but it is certain that before the departure of my uncle, he was oppressed with the most gloomy forebodings. These depressions he attributed to the difficulties of the momentous law-

suit which called him to Madrid, and which, in fact, involved his title to the whole possessions of his ancestors; but Isabelle's mind interpreted this despondence as the whisper of some guardian spirit or angel; and this belief, united with the difficulty she found in making the confession that lay at her heart, made her earnestly convert these glooms into an argument against his journey.

"Surely," she said, "this melancholy which besets you is some warning from above, which it would be impious to despise; and therefore, Sir, let me entreat you to remain here, lest you sin by tempting your own fate, and make me wretched for ever."

"Nay, Isabelle," he replied gravely, "I should rather sin by mistrusting the good providence of God, which is with us in all places; with the traveller in the desert, as with the mariner on the wild ocean; notwithstanding, let me embrace you, my dear child, as though we never should meet again;" and he held her

for some minutes closely pressed against his bosom.

I saw that Isabelle's heart was vainly swelling with the secret it had to deliver, and would fain have spoken for her; but she had strictly forbidden me or Antonio to utter a word on the subject, from a feeling that such an avowal should only come from her own lips. Twice, as her father prepared to mount his horse, she caught the skirts of his mantle and drew him back to the threshold; but as often as she attempted to speak, the blood overflooded her pale cheeks and bosom, her throat choked, and at last she turned away with a despairing gesture, which was meant to say, that the avowal was impossible. The Condé was not unmoved, but he mistook the cause of her agitation, and referred it to a vague presentiment of evil, by which he was not uninfluenced himself. Twice, after solemnly blessing his daughter, he turned back; once, indeed, to repeat some trifling direction, but the second time he lingered, abstracted and

thoughtful, as if internally taking a last farewell of his house and child. I had before earnestly entreated to be allowed to accompany him, and now renewed my request; but the proposal seemed only to offend him, as an imputation on the courage of an old soldier, and he deigned no other reply than by immediately setting spurs to his horse. I then turned to Isabelle; she was deadly pale, and with clasped hands and streaming eyes was leaning against the pillars of the porch for support. Neither of us spoke; but we kept our eyes earnestly fixed on the lessening figure, that with a slackened pace was now ascending the opposite hill. The road was winding, and sometimes hid and sometimes gave him back to our gaze, till at last he attained a point near the summit, where we knew a sudden turn of the road would soon cover him entirely from our sight. My cousin, I saw, was overwhelmed with fear and self-reproach, and pointing to the figure, now no bigger than a raven, I said I would still overtake him, and if she

pleased, induce him to return; but she would not listen to the suggestion. Her avowal, she said, should never come to her father from any lips but her own; but she still hoped, she added with a faint smile, that he would return safely from Madrid; and then, if the law-suit should be won, he would be in such a mood, that she should not be afraid to unlock her heart to him. This answer satisfied me. The Condé was now passing behind the extreme point of the road, and it was destined to be the last glimpse we should ever have of him. The old man never returned.

As soon as a considerable time had elapsed more than was necessary to inform us of his arrival in the capital, we began to grow very anxious, and a letter was despatched to his Advocate with the necessary inquiries. The answer brought affliction and dismay. The Condé had never made his appearance, and the greatest anxiety prevailed amongst the lawyers, engaged on his behalf, for the success

of their cause. Isabelle was in despair: all her tears and self reproaches were renewed with increased bitterness, and the tenderest arguments of Antonio and myself were insufficient to subdue her alarm, or console her for what was now aggravated in her eyes to a most heinous breach of filial piety and affection. She was naturally of a religious turn, and the reproofs of her confessor not only tended to increase her despondency, but induced her to impose upon herself a voluntary and rash act of penance, that caused us the greatest affliction. It had been concerted between Antonio and myself, that we should immediately proceed by different routes in search of my uncle; and at day-break, after the receipt of the Advocate's letter, we were mounted and armed, and ready to set forth upon our anxious expedition. It only remained for us to take leave of my cousin; and as we were conscious that some considerable degree of peril was attached to our pursuit, it was on mine, and

must have been to Antonio's feeling, a parting of anxious interest and importance. But the farewell was forbidden—the confessor himself informed us of a resolution which he strenuously commended, but which to us, for this once, seemed to rob his words of either reverence or authority. Isabelle, to mark her penitence for her imaginary sin, had abjured the company, and even the sight of her lover, until her father's return and she should have reposed in his bosom that filial confidence, which, she conceived, had been so sinfully omitted. This rash determination was confirmed by a sacred vow; and in a momentary fit of disappointment and disapprobation, which with pain I now confess, I refused to avail myself of the exception that was allowed in my favour, to receive her farewell. Antonio was loud in his murmurings; but the case admitted of no alternative, and we set forward with sad and heavy hearts, which were not at all lightened as we approached the appointed spot, where

we were to diverge from each other. I was accompanied by my man-servant Juan; but Antonio had resolutely persisted in his intention of travelling alone: the general rapidity and adventurous course of his proceedings, indeed, would have made a companion an incumbrance; and he insisted that the impenetrability and consequent success of his plans, had been always most insured by his being single in their execution. There was some reason in this argument. Antonio's spirits seemed to rally as he advanced to the threshold of the dangers and difficulties he was going probably to encounter; and after ardently wringing my hand, and half jestingly reminding me of the co-dependence of our lives, he dashed the spurs into his horse, and speedily galloped out of sight.

The road assigned to myself was the least arduous, but the one I thought it most likely my uncle would have taken on account of the neighbourhood of some family connexions,

whither his business would most probably carry him; but only at the first of these mansions could I obtain any intelligence of his arrival. He had called there to obtain some necessary signatures, and had proceeded without any expressed intention of the route in which he was next to travel. It was conjectured, however, that he would proceed to the Chateau of * * * * another branch of the family, and to that point I directed my course. But here all clue was lost; and no alternative was left me, but to return to the line of the high road to Madrid. I must here pass over a part of my progress, which would consist only of tedious repetitions. Traces, imagined to be discovered, but ending in constant disappointment—hopes and fears—exertion and fatigue, make up all the history of the second day, till finally a mistaken and unknown road brought us in time to take refuge from a tempestuous night at a lonely inn on the mountains. I have called it an inn, but the portion

thus occupied was only a fraction of an old deserted mansion, one wing of which had been rudely repaired and made habitable, whilst the greater part was left untenanted to its slow and picturesque decay. The contrast was striking: whilst in the windows of one end, the lights moving to and fro, the passing and repassing of shadows, and various intermitting noises and voices, denoted the occupancy; in the centre and the other extreme of the pile, silence and darkness held their desolate and absolute reign. I thought I recognized in this building the description of an ancient residence of my uncle's ancestry, but long since alienated and surrendered to the wardenship of Time. It frowned, methought, with the gloomy pride and defiance which had been recorded as the hereditary characteristics of its founders; and, but for the timely shelter it afforded, I should perhaps have bitterly denounced the appropriation of the innkeeper, which interfered so injuriously with these hal-

lowed associations. At present, when the sky lowered, and large falling raindrops heralded a tempest, I turned without reluctance from the old quaintly-wrought portal, to the more humble porch, which held out its invitation of comfort and hospitality.

My knocking brought the host himself to the door, and he speedily introduced me to an inner room, for the smallness of which he apologized, adding, that I should find however that it was the better for being somewhat distant from the noisy carousal of his other guests. This man was a striking example of the strange marriage of inconsistencies with which Nature seems sometimes to amuse herself. My arms were instinctively surrendered to the offer of his care; and, till I looked again on his face, I did not think they had been so imprudently given up. His countenance enveloped—almost hidden, in black shaggy hair—had in it a savage, animal expression, that excited at once my fear and disgust. It was wolf-like; and as I

have heard of brutes, that they are unable to endure the steady gaze of man, so his eyes were continually shifting; ever restless, yet ever watchful, though only by short and sidelong glances. They seemed to penetrate and surprise by startling and hasty snatches, the designs and emotions you might have kept veiled from a more stedfast and determined inquisition. I am certain, I would rather have met the most fixed and unremitting gaze than his. His frame was appropriately large, yet proportioned and muscular; it seemed adapted at once for strength and activity,—to spring, to wind, to crouch, or, at need, to stiffen itself into an attitude of staunch and inflexible resistance. How came such a figure to be the habitation of such a voice? This was low, mellow, full of soft and musical inflexions, which insinuated his courtesies with a charm it was impossible to repel. If the utterance be tuned by the heart, as some have affirmed, and the characteristics of passion denote themselves in the lines of the

countenance, what an irreconcileable contradiction was involved in this man! His face was infernal, demoniac—his utterance divine!

I know not if he observed the eager scrutiny with which I dwelt on these peculiarities; he hastily left me just as I had commenced those enquiries concerning my uncle, which my curiosity had in the first instance delayed. Perhaps he could not, or would not, reply to my questions; but they seemed to precipitate his retreat. Was it possible that he possessed any secret knowledge of the fate of the Condé? His absence had been succeeded by a momentary silence amongst the revellers without, as if he were relating to them the particulars of my inquiries. A slight glance at that boisterous company during my hasty passage through their banquet-room, had given me no very favourable opinion of their habits or character; and it was possible that the warlike defences and fastenings which I observed every where about me, might be as much intended for the home security of a

banditti, as for a precaution against their probable vicinity. It was now too late for me to retrace my steps. Flight was impracticable, the same precautions which were used against any hostile entrance, were equally opposed to my egress; unless, indeed, I had recourse to the way by which I had entered, and which led through the common room immediately occupied by the objects of my suspicion: this would have been to draw upon myself the very consequence I dreaded. My safety for the present seemed to be most assured by a careful suppression of all tokens of distrust, till these suspicions should be more explicitly confirmed; and I should not readily forgive myself if, after incurring all the dangers of darkness and tempest and an unknown country, it should prove that my apprehensions had been acted upon without any just foundation.

These thoughts, however, were soon diverted by a new object. The innkeeper's daughter entered with refreshments,—bread merely, with

a few olives; and I could not restrain Juan from addressing to her some familiarities, which were so strangely and incoherently answered, as quickly to bespeak my whole attention. It was then impossible to look away from her. From her features she had evidently been very handsome, with a good figure; but now she stooped in her shoulders, and had that peculiar crouching and humbled demeanour, which I have often observed in the insane. Indeed, she had altogether the manner and appearance of one under the influence of melancholy derangement. She looked, moved, spoke, like a being but half recovered from death and the grave; as if the body, indeed, was released from its cerements, but the mind had not yet escaped from its mortal thraldom. I never saw an eye so dark and so dull in woman!—it had not the least lustre or intelligence, but seemed glazed, and moved with a heaviness and languor just short of death! Her cheeks were as pale as marble, but of

a cold unhealthy ashen white; and my heart ached to think that they had been bleached, most probably, by bitter and continual tears. On her neck she wore a small black crucifix, which she sometimes kissed, as if mechanically, and with a very faint semblance of devotion; and her hands were adorned with several most costly and beautiful rings; far foreign, indeed, to her station; but borne, it seemed, without any feeling of personal vanity, or even of consciousness. The world seemed to contain for her no stirring interest; her mind had stagnated like a dark pool, or had rather frozen, till it took no impression from any external object. Where she acted, it was only from the influence of habit; and when the task was done, she relapsed again into the same cold and calm indifference. Judge, then, of my astonishment,—I might say, terror, when this mysterious being, so insensible, so apparently abstracted from all earthly contemplations, began to rivet her black eyes

upon mine, and to lose her accustomed apathy in an expression of some wild and inconceivable interest! What was there in me to arouse her from that mental trance in which she had been absorbed? I wished, with the most intense anxiety, to gain some information from her looks; and, yet at the same time, I could not confront her gaze even for an instant. Her father, who had entered, surprised at so extraordinary an emotion, hastened abruptly out; and the immediate entrance of the mother, evidently upon some feigned pretext of business, only tended to increase my inquietude.

How had I become an object of interest to these people, whom till that hour I had never seen; and with whose affairs, by any possibility, I could not have the most remote connexion, unless by their implication in the fate of my uncle? This conjecture filled me with an alarm and agitation I could ill have concealed, if my remorseless observer had not been too much ab-

sorbed in her own undivined emotions, to take any notice of mine. A sensation of shame flushed over me, at being thus quelled and daunted by the mere gaze of a woman; but then it was such a look and from such a being as I can never behold again! It seemed to realize all that I had read of Circean enchantment, or of the snake-like gaze, neither to be endured nor shunned; and under this dismal spell I remained till the timely entrance of Juan. The charm, whatever it might be, was then broken; with a long shuddering sigh she turned away her eyes from me, and then left the room. What a load, at that moment, seemed removed from my heart! Her presence had oppressed me, like that of one of the mortal Fates; but now, at her going, my ebbing breath returned again, and the blood thrilled joyfully through my veins.

Juan crossed himself in amaze! he had noticed me shrinking and shuddering beneath her glance, and doubtless framed the most horrible notions of an influence which could work upon

me so potently. He, too, had met with his own terrors, in a whispering dialogue he had partially overheard during his employment in the stable, and which served to unravel the fearful mystery that hung like a cloud over all the seeming and doings of that bewildered creature. She had loved; and it was but too plain, from the allusions of the dialogue, that the object of her affection had been a robber! He had suffered for his crimes a cruel and lingering death, of which she had been a constrained spectator, and she had maddened over the remembrance of his agonies.

It required but little conjecture to fill up the blanks of the narrative; her manners, her apathy, the possession of those costly ornaments, were easily accounted for; and it only remained to find a solution for the wild and intense interest with which she had regarded me. This would have a natural explanation by supposing in myself some accidental resemblance to the features of her lover; and the after-course of events

proved that this conjecture was well founded. There were sufficient grounds in these particulars for inquietude and alarm. From the nature of her attachment, the avocations and connections of the family must be of a very dubious character. What if my host himself should be secretly associated with some neighbouring horde of banditti, and under his ostensible occupation of innkeeper, abetted their savage and blood-thirsty designs upon the unwary traveller! Might not his very house be their lurking-place or rendezvous? nay, might it not be provided with cellars and traps, and secret vaults, and all those atrocious contrivances which we have heard of as expressly prepared for the perpetration of outrage and murder? There was a marked wariness and reserve about the master, a mixture of fox-like caution, with the ferocity of the wolf, that confirmed, rather than allayed such suspicions; and why had my arms been so officiously conveyed away, under a pretence of care and attention, but in reality to deprive

me of even the chances of defence? All these considerations shaped themselves so reasonably, and agreed together so naturally, as to induce conviction; and looking upon myself as a victim already marked for destruction, it only remained for me to exercise all my sagacity and mental energy, to extricate myself from the toils. Flight, I had resolved, was impracticable,—and if I should demand my arms, the result of such an application was obviously certain; I dared not even hint a suspicion: but why do I speak of suspicions, they were immediately to be ripened into an appalling certainty.

I had not communicated my thoughts to Juan, knowing too well his impetuous and indiscreet character; but in the meantime his own fears had been busy with him, and his depression was aggravated by the circumstance that he had not been able to procure any wine from the Innkeeper, who swore that he had not so much as a flask left in his house. It would have been difficult to believe that one of his

profession should be so indifferently provided; but this assertion, made in the face of all the flasks and flaggons of his revellers, convinced me that he felt his own mastery over us, and was resolved to let us cost him as little as possible.

Juan was in despair; his courage was always proportioned to the wine he had taken, and feeling at this moment an urgent necessity for its assistance, he resolved to supply himself by a stolen visit to the cellar. He had shrewdly taken note of its situation during a temporary assistance rendered to the Innkeeper, and made sure that by watching his opportunity he could reach it unperceived. It seemed to require no small degree of courage to venture in the dark upon such a course; but the excitement was stronger than fear could overbalance; and plucking off his boots, to prevent any noise, he set forth on his expedition. No sooner was he gone, than I began to perceive the danger to which such an imprudent step might subject us, but it was too late to be recalled, and I was obliged

to wait in no very enviable anxiety for his return.

The interval was tediously long, or seemed so, before he made his appearance. He bore a small cann: and, from his looks, had met with no serious obstacle, but whether the theft had been observed, or it happened simply by chance, the Innkeeper entered close upon his heels. There is sometimes an instinctive presence of mind inspired by the aspect of danger; and guided by this impulse, in an instant I extinguished the light as if by accident. For a time, at least, we were sheltered from discovery. The Innkeeper turned back—it was a critical moment for us,—but even in that moment the unruly spirit of drink prompted my unlucky servant to take a draught of his stolen beverage, and immediately afterwards I heard him spitting it forth again, in evident disgust with its flavour. In a few moments the Innkeeper returned with a lamp, and as soon as he was gone the liquor was eagerly inspected, and to our unspeakable

horror, it had every appearance of blood! It was impossible to suppress the effect of the natural disgust which affected Juan at this loathsome discovery—he groaned aloud, he vomited violently, the Innkeeper again came in upon us, and though I attributed the illness of my servant to an internal rupture which occasioned him at times to spit up blood, it was evident that he gave no credit to the explanation. He seemed to comprehend the whole scene at a glance. In fact, the vessel, with its horrid contents, stood there to confront me, and I gave up my vain attempt in silent and absolute despair.

If we were not before devoted to death, this deadly circumstance had decided our fate. His own safety, indeed, would enforce upon the Innkeeper the necessity of our being sacrificed. The fellow, meanwhile, departed without uttering a syllable: but I saw in his look that his determination was sealed, and that my own must be as promptly resolved. I had before thought of one measure as a last desperate

resource. This was to avail myself of the favourable interest I had excited in the daughter—to appeal to her pity—to awaken her, if possible, to a sympathy with my danger, and invoke her interference to assist my escape. Yet how could I obtain even an interview for my purpose? Strange that I should now wish so ardently for that very being whose presence had so lately seemed to me a curse. Now I listened for her voice, her step, with an impatience never equalled, perhaps, but by him for whom she had crazed. My whole hope rested on that resemblance which might attract her again to gaze on a shadow, as it were, of his image, and I was not deceived. She came again, and quietly seating herself before me, began to watch me with the same earnestness.

Poor wretch! now that I knew her history, I regarded her with nothing but tenderness and pity. Her love might have burned as bright and pure as ever was kindled in a maiden's bosom; and was she necessarily aware of the

unhallowed profession of its object? He might have been brave, generous—in love, at least, honoured and honourable, and compared with the wretches with whom her home associated her, even as an angel of light. Would his fate else have crushed her with that eternal sorrow? Such were my reflections on the melancholy ruin of woman before me; and if my pity could obtain its recompense in hers, I was saved!

Hope catches at straws. I saw, or fancied in her looks, an affectionate expression of sympathy and anxiety, that I eagerly interpreted in my own behalf; but the result belied this anticipation. It was evident that my most impassioned words produced no corresponding impression on her mind. My voice even seemed to dispel the illusion that was raised by my features, and rising up, she was going to withdraw, but that I detained her by seizing her hand.

"No, no!" she said, and made a slight effort to free herself; "you are not Andreas."

"No, my poor maiden," I said, "I am not Andreas; but am I not his image? Do I not remind you of his look, of his features?"

"Yes, yes," she replied quickly, "you *are* like my Andreas—you are like him here," and she stroked back the hair from my forehead; "but *his* hair was darker than this," and the mournful remembrance for the first time filled her dull eyes with tears.

This was an auspicious omen. Whilst I saw only her hot glazed eyes, as if the fever within had parched up every tear, I despaired of exciting her sympathy with an external interest; but now that her grief and her malady even seemed to relent in this effusion, it was a favourable moment for renewing my appeal. I addressed her in the most touching voice I could assume.

"You loved Andreas, and you say I resemble him; for his sake, will you not save me from perishing?"

Her only answer was an unconscious and wondering look.

" I know too well," I continued, " that I am to perish, and you know it likewise. Am I not to be murdered this very night?"

She made no reply; but it seemed as if she had comprehended my words. Could it be, that with that strange cunning not uncommon to insanity, she thus dissembled, in order to cover her own knowledge of the murderous designs of her father? I resolved, at least, to proceed on this supposition, and repeated my words in a tone of certainty. This decision had its effect; or else, her reason had before been incompetent to my question.

" Yes! yes! yes!" she said, in a low hurried tone, and with a suspicious glance at the door, " it is so; he will come to you about midnight. You are the son of the old man we strangled."

Conceive how I started at these words! They literally stung my ears. It was not

merely that my worst fears were verified, as regarded the fate of my uncle; for, doubtless, he was the victim—or, that I was looked upon and devoted to a bloody death as his avenger; for these announcements I was already prepared; but there was yet another and a deeper cause of horror:—"The old man that *we* strangled!" Had that wild maniac then lent her own hands to the horrid deed,—had she, perhaps, helped to bind,—to pluck down and hold the struggling victim,—to stifle his feeble cries,—nay, joined her strength even to tighten the fatal cord; or was it that she only implicated herself in the act, by the use of an equivocal expression? It might merely signify, that it was the act of some of those of the house; with whom, by habit, she included herself as a part. At the same time, I could not but remember, that even the female heart has been known to become so hardened by desperation and habitudes of crime, as to be capable of the most ferocious and remorseless

cruelties. She had too, those same black eyes and locks, which I have always been accustomed to think of in connexion with Jael and Judith, and all those stern-hearted women, who dipped their unfaltering hands in blood. Her brain was dizzy, her bosom was chilled, her sympathies were dead and torpid, and she might gaze on murder and all its horrors, with her wonted apathy and indifference. To what a being then was I going to commit my safety! To one, who from the cradle had been nursed amidst scenes of bloodshed and violence; whose associates had ever been the fierce and the lawless; whose lover even had been a leader of banditti; and by his influence and example, might make even murder and cruelty lose some portion of their natural blackness and horror.

It might happen, that in these thoughts I wronged that unhappy creature; but my dismal situation, predisposed me to regard every thing in the most unfavourable light. I had cause

for apprehension in every sound that was raised,—in every foot that stirred,—in whatever face I met,—that belonged to that horrible place. Still, my present experiment was the last, short of mere force, which I could hope would avail me; and I resumed the attempt. It seemed prudent, in order to quiet the suspicion I had excited, that I should first disclaim all connexion or interest in the unfortunate victim; and I thought it not criminal, in such an extremity, to have recourse to a falsehood.

"What you say," I replied to her, "of an old man being murdered, is to me a mystery. If such an occurrence has happened, it is no doubt lamentable to some one; but as for my father, I trust, that for these many years he has been with the blessed in the presence of God. For myself, I am a traveller, and the purposes of my journey are purely mercantile. My birth-place is England,—but, alas! I shall never see it again! You tell me I am to die

to-night,—that I am to perish by violence;—and have you the heart to resign me to such a horrible fate? You have power or interest to save me; let me not perish by I know not what cruelties. I have a home far away—let it not be made desolate. Let me return to my wife, and to my young children, and they shall daily bless thee at the foot of our altars!"

I believe the necessity of the occasion inspired me with a suitable eloquence of voice and manner; for these words, untrue as they were, made a visible impression on the wild being to whom they were addressed. As I spoke of violence and cruelty she shuddered, as if moved by her own terrible associations with those words; but when I came to the mention of my wife and children, it evidently awakened her compassion; and all at once, her womanly nature burst through the sullen clouds that had held it in eclipse.

"Oh, no—no—no!" she replied, hurriedly;

"You must not die—your babes will weep else, and your wife will craze. Andreas would have said thus too, but he met with no pity for all the eyes that wept for him."

She clasped her forehead for a moment with her hands, and continued:—"But I must find a way to save you. I thought, when *he* died, I could never pity any one again; but he will be glad in Heaven, that I have spared one for his sake.

A momentary pang shot through me at these touching words, when I remembered how much I had wronged her by my injurious suspicions: but the consideration of my personal safety quickly engrossed my thoughts, and I demanded eagerly to know by what means she proposed to effect my escape. She soon satisfied me that it would be a trial of my utmost fortitude. There was a secret door in the paneling of my allotted bed-chamber, which communicated with her own, and by this, an hour before midnight, she would guide me and provide for my egress

from the house: but she could neither promise to procure me my horse, nor to provide for the safety of the unlucky Juan, who was destined to be lodged in a loft far distant from my apartment. It may be imagined that I listened with a very unwilling ear to this arrangement; by which, alone, unarmed, I was to await the uncertain coming of my preserver. What if by any accident it should be preceded by that of the assassin?—but it was idle to indulge in these doubts. There was but one chance of escape open to me; and it was for me to embrace it upon whatever terms it was offered. Accordingly, I promised to conform explicitly to the maiden's instructions, to offer no opposition to any arrangements which should be made, to stifle carefully the slightest indications of mistrust, to seal up my lips for ever in silence on these events, and above all, to avoid any expression or movement which might give umbrage to her father; with these cautions, and kissing

her crucifix in token of her sincerity, she left me.

I was alone; Juan, on some occasion had withdrawn, and I was left to the companionship of reflections, which in such a feverish interval could not be anything but disgusting. At one time, I calculated the many chances there were against the continuance of this rational interval in the mind of a maniac: then I doubted her power of saving me, and whether the means she had proposed as existing in reality, might not be her own delusion, as well as mine. I even debated with myself, whether it was not an act of moral turpitude that I should accept of deliverance without stipulating for the safety of my poor servant.

These thoughts utterly unnerved me. The ticking of the clock grew into a sensation of real and exquisite pain, as indicating the continual advances of time towards a certain crisis, with its yet uncertain catastrophe. The hour-hand

was already within a few digits of ten, and kept travelling onward with my thoughts, to a point that might verge with me on eternity. The lamp was every moment consuming its little remainder of oil, to supply me, it might be, with my last of light. My days were perhaps numbered; and the blood taking its last course through my veins!

One of these subjects of my anxiety I might have spared myself. The Innkeeper abruptly entered, and with a look and tone of seeming dissatisfaction, informed me that Juan had decamped, taking with him my arms, and whatever of my portable property he had been able to lay his hands upon. So far then, if the tale was true, he was safe: but it seemed wonderful by what means he could have eluded a vigilance which, doubtless, included him in its keeping; and still more, that at such a moment he should have chosen to rob me. A minute ago I would have staked my fortune on his honesty, and my life on his fidelity. The

story was too improbable: but on the other hand it was but too likely that he had either been actually despatched, or else in some way removed from me, that I might not claim his company or assistance in my chamber.

There was only one person who was likely to solve these doubts, and she was absent; and I began to consider that in order to give time and scope for her promised assistance, it was necessary that I should retire. To ask in a few words to be shown to my room seemed an easy task: but when I glanced on the dark scowling features of my chamberlain, harshly and vividly marked by the strong light and shade, as he bent over the lamp, even those few words were beyond my utterance. To meet such a visage, in the dead of night, thrusting apart one's curtains, would be a sufficient warning for death! The ruffian seemed to understand and anticipate my unexpressed desire, and taking up the lamp, proposed to conduct me to my chamber. I nodded assent, and he began to lead

the way in the same deep silence. A mutual and conscious antipathy seemed to keep us from speaking.

Our way led through several dark, narrow passages, and through one or two small rooms, which I lost no time in reconnoitring. The accumulated cobwebs which hung from all the angles of the ceilings, the old dingy furnitures, and the visible neglect of cleanliness, gave them an aspect of dreariness that chilled me to the very soul. As I passed through them, I fancied that on the dusty floors I could trace the stains of blood; the walls seemed spotted and splashed with the same hue; the rude hands of my host-guide even seemed tinged with it. As though I had gazed on the sun, a crimson blot hovered before me wherever I looked, and imbued all objects with this horrible colour. Every moving shadow, projected by the lamp on the walls, seemed to be the passing spectre of some one who had here been murdered, sometimes confronting me at a door, sometimes looking down

upon me from the ceiling, or echoing me, step by step, up the old, crazy stairs; still following me indeed, whithersoever I went, as if conscious of our approaching fellowship!

At last I was informed that I stood in my allotted chamber. I instantly and mechanically cast my eyes towards the window, and a moment's glance sufficed to show me that it was strongly grated. This movement did not escape the vigilant eye of my companion.

"Well, Senor," he said, "what dost think, have I not bravely barricaded my chateau?"

I could make no answer. There was a look and tone of triumph and malicious irony, accompanying the question, that would not have suffered me to speak calmly. The ruffian had secured his victim, and looked upon me, no doubt, as a spider does upon its prey, which it has immeshed, and leaves to be destroyed at its leisure. Fortunately, I recollected his daughter's caution, and subdued my emotion in his presence; but my heart sank within me at his

exit, as I heard the door locked behind him, and felt myself his prisoner. All the horrible narratives I had read, or heard related of midnight assassinations, of travellers murdered in such very abodes as this, thronged into my memory with a vivid and hideous fidelity to their wild and horrible details. A fearful curiosity led me towards the bed; a presentiment that it would afford me some unequivocal confirmation of these fears; and I turned over the pillow, with a shuddering conviction that on the under side I should be startled with stains of blood. It was, however, fair, snow-white indeed; and the sheets and coverlet were of the same innocent colour.

I then recollected the secret panel. It was natural that I should be eager to verify its existence, but with the strictest inspection I could make, I was unable to discover any trace of it. Panels indeed opened upon me from every side; but it was only to usher forth hideous phantoms of armed ruffians, with

brandished daggers, that vanished again on a moment's scrutiny: and as these panels were only creations of my imagination, so that one for which I sought had no existence, I doubted not, but in the bewildered brain of a maniac.

Thus then, my last avenue to escape was utterly annihilated, and I had no hope left but in such a despairing resistance as I might make by help of the mere bones and sinews with which God had provided me. The whole furniture of the chamber would not afford me an effective weapon, and a thousand times I cursed myself that I had not sooner adopted this desperate resolution, while such rude arms as a fire-place could supply me with were within my reach. There was now nothing left for me but to die; and Antonio would have another victim to avenge. Alas! would he ever know how or where I had perished; or that I had even passed the boundaries of death! I should fall unheard, unseen, unwept, and my unsoothed spirit would walk unavenged, with those sha-

dows I had fancied wandering. The reflection maddened me. My brain whirled dizzily round; my brow seemed parched by the fever of my thoughts, and hastening to the window, I threw open a little wicket for air: a grateful gush of wind immediately entered; but the lamp with which I had been making my fruitless search, was still in my hand, and that gust extinguished it.

Darkness was now added to all my other evils. There was no moon nor a single star; the night was intensely obscure, and groping my way back to the bed, I cast myself upon it in an agony of despair. I cannot describe the dreadful storm of passions that shook me: fear, anguish, horror, self-reproach, made up the terrible chaos; and then came rage, and I vowed, if ever I survived, to visit my tormentors with a bloody and fierce retribution. I have said that the room was utterly dark, but imagination peopled it with terrific images; and kept my eyes straining upon the gloom, with

an attention painfully intense. Shadows blacker even than the night, seemed to pass and repass before me ; the curtains were grasped and withdrawn; visionary arms, furnished with glancing steel, were uplifted and descended again into obscurity. Every sense was assailed ; the silence was interrupted by audible breathings—slow cautious footsteps stirred across the floor—imagined hands travelled stealthily over the bedclothes, as if in feeling for my face. Then I heard distant shrieks, and recognized the voice of Juan in piteous and gradually stifled intercession ; sometimes the bed seemed descending under me, as if into some yawning vault or cellar, and at others, faint fumes of sulphur would seem to issue from the floor, as if designed to suffocate me, without affording me even the poor chance of resistance.

At length a sound came, which my ear readily distinguished, by its distinctness, from the mere suggestions of fear: it was the cautious unlocking and opening of the door. My

eyes turning instantly in that direction, were eagerly distended, but there was not a glimmer of light even accompanied the entrance of my unknown visitor: but it was a man's foot. A boiling noise rushed through my ears, and my tongue and throat were parched with a sudden and stifling thirst. The power of utterance and of motion seemed at once to desert me; my heart panted as though it were grown too large for my body, and the weight of twenty mountains lay piled upon my breast. To lie still, however, was to be lost. By a violent exertion of the will, I flung myself out of the bed, furthest from the door; and scarcely had I set foot upon the ground, when I heard something strike against the opposite side. Immediately afterwards a heavy blow was given—a second– a third; the stabs, themselves, as well as the sound, seemed to fall upon my very heart. A cold sweat rushed out upon my forehead. I felt sick, my limbs bowed, and I could barely keep myself from

falling. It was certain that my absence would be promptly discovered: that a search would instantly commence, and my only chance was, by listening intensely for his footsteps, to discern the course and elude the approaches of my foe.

I could hear him grasp the pillows, and the rustling of the bed-clothes as he turned them over in his search. For a minute all was then deeply, painfully silent. I could fancy him stealing towards me, and almost supposed the warmth of his breath against my face. I expected every instant to feel myself seized, I knew not where, in his grasp, and my flesh was ready to shrink all over from his touch. Such an interval had now elapsed as I judged would suffice for him to traverse the bed; and in fact the next moment his foot struck against the wainscot close beside me, followed by a long hasty sweep of his arm along the wall—it seemed to pass over my head. Then all was still again, as if he paused to listen; mean-

while I strode away, silently as death, in the direction of the opposite side of the chamber. Then I paused: but I had suppressed my breath so long, that involuntarily it escaped from me in a long deep sigh, and I was forced again to change my station. There was not a particle of light; but in shifting cautiously round, I espied a bright spot or crevice in the wall: upon this spot I resolved to keep my eyes steadily fixed, judging that by this means I should be warned of the approach of any opaque body, by its intercepting the light. On a sudden, it was obscured; but I have reason to believe it was by some unconscious movement of my own, for just as I retired backwards, from the approach, as I conceived, of my enemy, I was suddenly seized from behind. The crisis was come, and all my fears were consummated: I was in the arms of the assassin!

A fierce and desperate struggle instantly commenced, which, from its nature, could be

but of short duration. I was defenceless, but my adversary was armed; and, wherever he might aim his dagger, I was disabled, by the utter darkness, from warding off the blow. The salvation of my life depended only on the strength and presence of mind I might bring to the conflict. A momentary relaxation of his hold indicated that my foe was about to make use of his weapon; and my immediate impulse was to grasp him so closely round the body, as to deprive him of the advantage. My antagonist was fearfully powerful, and struggled violently to free himself from my arms; but an acquaintance with wrestling and athletic sports, acquired in my youth, and still more the strong love of life, enabled me to grapple with him and maintain my hold. I was safe, indeed, only so long as I could restrain him from the use of his steel. Our arms were firmly locked in each other, our chests closely pressed together, and it seemed that strength at least was fairly matched with strength.

From a dogged shame, perhaps, or whatever cause, the ruffian did not deign to summon any other to his aid, but endeavoured, singly and silently, to accomplish his bloody task. Not a word, in fact, was uttered on either part—not a breathing space even was allowed by our brief and desperate struggle. Many violent efforts were made by the wretch to disengage himself, in the course of which we were often forced against the wall, or hung balanced on straining sinews, ready to fall headlong on the floor. At last, by one of these furious exertions, we were dashed against the wall, and the panelling giving way to our weight, we were precipitated with a fearful crash, but still clinging to each other, down a considerable descent. On touching the ground, however, the violence of the shock separated us. The ruffian, fortunately, had fallen undermost, which stunned him, and gave me time to spring upon my feet.

A moment's glance round told me that we had fallen through the secret panel, spoken of

by the maniac, into her own chamber; but my eyes were too soon riveted by one object, to take any further note of the place. It was her —that wild, strange being herself, just risen from her chair at this thundering intrusion, drowsy and bewildered, as if from a calm and profound sleep. She that was to watch, to snatch me from the dagger itself, had forgotten and slept over the appointment that involved my very existence!

But this was no time for wonder or reproach. My late assailant was lying prostrate before me, and his masterless weapon was readily to be seized and appropriated to my own defence. I might have killed him, but a moment's reflection showed me that his single death, whilst it might exasperate his fellows, could tend but little to my safety. This was yet but a present and temporary security; a respite, not a reprieve, from the fate that impended over me. It was important, therefore, to learn, if possible, from that bewildered creature, the means which

should have led to my escape from the house; and if she was still willing and competent to become my guide. The first step had been accidentally accomplished; but here it seemed that my progress was to find its termination. All the past, except that horrible and distant part of it over which she brooded, had utterly lapsed again from her memory, like words traced upon water. The examination only lasted for a moment, but it sufficed to convince me of this unwelcome result. What then, indeed, could have been expected from the uncertain and intermitting intelligences of a maniac? I wondered how I could have built up a single hope on so slippery a foundation.

It was now too late to arraign my folly or bewail its consequence; a few minutes would recal the robber to consciousness, and those were all that would allow me to seek, or avail myself of any passage for retreat. Although no other entrance was immediately apparent, it was obvious that this chamber must have some

other one, than the panel by which I had so unexpectedly arrived; and this conclusion proved to be correct.

There was a trap-door, in one corner, for communication with beneath. To espy it—to grasp the ring—to raise it up—were the transactions of an instant; but no sooner was it thrown open, than my ears were assailed by a sudden uproar of sounds from below. The noise seemed at first to be the mere Bacchanalian riot of a drunken banditti; but a continued attention made me interpret differently of the tumult, which now seemed to partake less of the mirth of carousal, than of the violence and voices of some serious affray. The distance of the sounds, which came from the further part of the house, precluded an accurate judgment of their nature. Had the banditti quarrelled amongst themselves, and proceeded to blows? The disorder and distraction incident to such a tumult could not but be highly favourable to my purpose; and I was just on the point of

stepping through the aperture, when the ruffian behind me, as if aroused by the uproar, sprang up on his feet, rushed past me with a speed that seemed to be urged by alarm, and bounded through the trap-door. The room beneath was in darkness, so that I was unable to distinguish his course, which his intimate knowledge of the place, nevertheless, enabled him to pursue with ease and certainty.

As soon as his footsteps were unheard, I followed, with less speed and celerity. I might, indeed, have possessed myself of the lamp which stood upon the table, but a light would infallibly have betrayed me, and I continued to grope my way in darkness and ignorance to the lower chamber. An influx of sound, to the left, denoted an open door, and directing my course to that quarter, I found that it led into a narrow passage. As yet I had seen no light; but now a cool gush of air seemed to promise that a few steps onward I should meet with a window. It proved to be only a loop-hole.

The noise as I advanced had meanwhile become more and more violent, and was now even accompanied by irregular discharges of pistols. My vicinity to the scene of contest made me hesitate. I could even distinguish voices, and partially understood the blasphemies and imprecations that were most loudly uttered. I had before attributed this tumult to a brawling contention amongst the inmates themselves, but now the indications seemed to be those of a more serious strife. The discharges of fire-arms were almost incessant, and the shouts and cries were like the cheers of onset and battle, of fury and anguish. The banditti had doubtless been tracked and assaulted in their den ; and it became necessary to consider what course in such a case it was the most prudent for me to adopt. Should I seek for some place of concealment, and there await the issue of a contest, which would most probably terminate in favour of justice?—or ought I not rather to hasten and lend all my energies to the cause?

I still held in my hand the dagger, of which I had possessed myself; but could it be hoped that thus imperfectly armed, if armed it might be called, my feeble aid could essentially contribute to such a victory?

The decision was as suddenly as unexpectedly resolved. A familiar voice, which I could not mistake, though loud and raving far above its natural pitch, amidst a clamour of fifty others—struck on my ear; and no other call was necessary to precipitate my steps towards the scene of action. I had yet to traverse some passages, which the increase of light enabled me to do more readily. The smoke, the din, the flashing reflections along the walls, now told me that I was close upon the strife; and in a few moments, on turning an abrupt angle, I had it in all its confusion before me.

The first and nearest object that struck me was the figure of the Innkeeper himself, apparently in the act of reloading his piece. His back was towards me, but I could not mistake

his tall and muscular frame. On hearing a step behind him, he turned hastily round, discharged a pistol at my head, and then disappeared in the thickest of the tumult. The ball, however, only whizzed past my ear; but not harmless, for immediately afterwards I felt some one reel against me from behind, clasp me for an instant by the shoulders, and then roll downwards to the floor. The noise, and the exciting interest which hurried me hither had hindered me from perceiving that I was followed, and I turned eagerly round to ascertain who had become the victim of the mis-directed shot. It was the ruffian's own daughter; the unhappy maniac herself, whose shattered brain had thus received from his hand the last pang it was destined to endure; a single groan was all that the poor wretch had uttered. I felt an inexpressible shock at this horrid catastrophe. I was stained with her blood, particles of her brain even adhered to my clothes; and I was glad to escape from the horror excited by the

harrowing spectacle, by plunging into the chaos before me. Further than of a few moments, during which, however, I had exchanged and parried a number of blows and thrusts, I have no recollection. A spent ball on the rebound struck me directly on the forehead, and laid me insensible, under foot, amidst the dying and the dead.

When I recovered, I found myself lying on a bed—the same, by a strange coincidence, that I had already occupied; but the faces around me, though warlike, were friendly. My first eager inquiries, as soon as I could speak, were for my friend Antonio, for it was indeed his voice that I had recognized amidst the conflict, but I could obtain no direct answer. Sad and silent looks, sighs and tears, only, made up the terrible response. He was then slain! Nothing but death indeed would have kept him at such a moment from my pillow. It availed nothing to me that the victory had been won, that their wretched adversaries were all prison-

ers or destroyed; at such a price, a thousand of such victories would have been dearly purchased. If I could have felt any consolation in his death, it would have been to learn that his arm had first amply avenged in blood the murder of the Condé—that the Innkeeper had been cleft by him to the heart—that numbers of the robbers had perished by his heroic hand: but I only replied to the tidings with tears for my friend, and regrets that I had not died with him. How cruelly, by his going before me, had the sweet belief of our youth been falsified! Was it possible that I had survived: perhaps to see the grass grow over his head; and to walk alone upon the earth, when he should be nothing but a little dust? Why had I been spared? others could convey to Isabelle the afflicting intelligence that she had no longer a father or a lover; and in such an overwhelming dispensation, she could well forego the poor and unavailing consolations of a friend.

Such were my natural and desponding feel-

ings, on contemplating the loss of my beloved friend;—but new and indispensable duties recalled the energies of my mind, and diverted me from a grief which would else have consumed me. The last sacred rites remained to be performed for the dead; and although the fate of the Condé might readily be divined, it was necessary to establish its certainty by the discovery of his remains. The prisoners who were questioned on this point maintained an obstinate silence; and the researches of the military had hitherto been unavailing, except to one poor wretch, whom they rescued from extreme suffering and probable death.

I have related the disappearance of my servant Juan, and my suspicions as to the cause of his absence were found to have verged nearly on the truth. He had saved himself, it appeared, from immediate danger, by a feigned compliance with the invitations of the banditti to enrol himself in their numbers; but as a precaution or a probation, he had been bound

hand and foot, and consigned to a garret till I should have been first disposed of. The poor fellow was dreadfully cramped in his limbs by the tightness of the ligatures, and was nearly half dead with cold and affright, when he was thus opportunely discovered; but no sooner had he revived, and comprehended the object of our search, than his memory supplied us with a clue:—the wine-barrels! The house had been narrowly investigated; but these cellars, by some hasty omission, had been overlooked.

I resolved to lead this new inquisition myself. Juan's sickening and disgustful recollections, which now pointed his suspicions, would not let him be present at the examination; but he directed us by such minute particulars, that we had no difficulty in finding our way to the spot. There were other traces had they been necessary for our guidance: stains of blood were seen on descending the stairs and across the floor, till they terminated at a large barrel or tun, which stood first of a range of several

others, on the opposite side of the cellar. Here then stood the vessel that contained the object of our search. My firm conviction that it was so, made me see, as through the wood itself, the mutilated appearance which I had conceived of my ill-fated uncle. The horrible picture overcame me;—and whilst I involuntarily turned aside, the mangled quarters of a human body, and finally the dissevered head, were drawn forth from the infernal receptacle! As soon as I dared turn my eyes, they fell upon the fearful spectacle; but I looked in vain for the lineaments I had expected to meet. The remains were those of a middle-aged man; the features were quite unknown to me; but a profusion of long black hair told me at a glance, that this was not the head of the aged Condé. Neither could this belong to the old man who had been alluded to by the maniac as having been strangled. Our search must, therefore, be extended.

The neighbouring barrel from its sound was empty, and the next likewise; but the third, and last one, on being struck, gave indications of being occupied; perhaps, by contents as horrible as those of the first. It was, however, only half filled with water. There was still a smaller cellar, communicating with the outer one, by a narrow arched passage; but on examination, it proved to have been applied to its original and legitimate purpose, for it contained a considerable quantity of wine. Every recess, every nook, was carefully inspected; the floors in particular were minutely examined, but they supplied no appearance of having been recently disturbed.

This unsuccessful result almost begot a doubt in me, whether, indeed, this place had been the theatre of the imputed tragedy; my strongest belief had been founded on the words of the maniac, in allusion to the old man who had been strangled; but her story pointed to no determinate period of time, and might refer

to an occurrence of many years back. Surely the police and the military, Antonio certainly, had been led hither by some more perfect information. I had neglected, hitherto, to possess myself of the particulars which led to their attack on the house; but the answers to my inquiries tended in no way to throw any light upon the fate of the Condé. Antonio, in his progress through the mountains, had fallen in with a party of the provincial militia, who were scouring the country in pursuit of the predatory bands that infested it; and the capture of a wounded robber had furnished them with the particulars which led to their attack upon the inn. The dying wretch had been eagerly interrogated by Antonio, as to his knowledge of the transactions of his fellows; but though he could obtain no intelligence of the Condé, his impetuous spirit made him readily unite himself with an expedition against a class of men, to whom he confidently attributed the old nobleman's myste-

rious disappearance. The mournful sequel I have related. His vengeance was amply but dearly sated on the Innkeeper and his blood-thirsty associates;—but the fate of my uncle remained as doubtful as ever.

The discovery was reserved for chance. One of the troopers, in shifting some litter in the stables, remarked that the earth and stones beneath appeared to have been recently turned up: the fact was immediately communicated to his officer, and I was summoned to be present at this new investigation. The men had already begun to dig when I arrived, and some soiled fragments of clothes which they turned up, already assured them of the nature and the nearness of the deposit. A few moments more labour sufficed to lay it bare; and then, by the torchlight, I instantly recognized the grey hairs and the features of him of whom we were in search. All that remained of my uncle lay before me! The starting and blood-distended eyes, the gaping mouth, the blackness of the

face, and a livid mark round the neck, confirmed the tale of the maniac as to the cruel mode of his death. May I never gaze on such an object again !

Hitherto, the excitement, the labour, the uncertainty of the search had sustained me ; but now a violent re-action took place, a reflux of all the horrors I had witnessed and endured rushed over me like a flood ; and for some time I raved in a state of high delirium. I was again laid in bed, and in the interval of my repose, preparations were made for our departure. The bodies of the slain robbers and militia-men were promptly interred, and after securing all the portable effects of any value, which the soldiers were allowed to appropriate as a spoil, the house was ordered to be fired, as affording too eligible a refuge and rendezvous for such desperate associations. At my earnest request, a separate grave had been provided for the remains of the unfortunate maniac, which were committed to the earth with all the decen-

cies that our limited time and means could afford. The spot had been chosen at the foot of a tall pine, in the rear of the house, and a small cross carved in the bark of the tree was the only memorial of this ill-starred girl.

These cares, speedily executed, occupied till day-break, and just at sunrise we commenced our march. A horse, left masterless by the death of one of the troopers, was assigned to me; two others were more mournfully occupied by the bodies of Antonio and the Condé, each covered with a coarse sheet; and the captive robbers followed, bound, with their faces backward, upon the Innkeeper's mules. The Innkeeper's wife was amongst the prisoners, and her loud lamentations, breaking out afresh at every few paces, prevailed even over the boisterous merriment of the troopers, and the low-muttered imprecations of the banditti. When, from the rear, I looked upon this wild procession, in the cold grey light of the morning winding down the mountains, that warlike

escort, those two horses, with their funereal burthens, the fierce scowling faces of the prisoners, confronting me; and then turned back, and distinguished the tall pine-tree, and saw the dense column of smoke soaring upward from those ancient ruins, as from some altar dedicated to Vengeance, the whole past appeared to me like a dream! My mind, stunned by the magnitude and number of events which had been crowded into a single night's space, refused to believe that so bounded a period had sufficed for such disproportionate effects; but recalled again and again every scene and every fact,—as if to be convinced by the vividness of the repetitions, and the fidelity of the details—of a foregone reality. I could not banish or divert these thoughts: all the former horrors were freshly dramatized before me; the images of the Innkeeper, of the maniac, of Juan, of Antonio, were successively conjured up, and acted their parts anew, till all was finally wound

up in the consummation that riveted my eyes on those two melancholy burthens before me.

But I will not dwell here on those objects as I did then. An hour or two after sunrise we entered a town, where we delivered up to justice those miserable wretches, who were afterwards to be seen impaled and blackening in the sun throughout the province. And here also my own progress, for three long months, was destined to be impeded. Other lips than mine conveyed to Isabelle the dismal tidings with which I was charged; other hands than mine assisted in paying to the dead their last pious dues. Excessive fatigue, grief, horror, and a neglected wound, generated a raging fever, from which, with difficulty, and by slow degrees, I recovered,—alas! only to find myself an alien on the earth, without one tie to attach me to the life I had so unwillingly regained!

* * * * *

I have only to speak of the fate of one more

person connected with this history. In the Convent of St. ***, at Madrid, there is one, who, by the peculiar sweetness of her disposition, and the superior sanctity of her life, has obtained the love and veneration of all her pure sisterhood. She is called sister Isabelle. The lines of an early and acute sorrow are deeply engraven on her brow, but her life is placid and serene, as it is holy and saint-like; and her eyes will neither weep, nor her bosom heave a sigh, but when she recurs to the memorials of this melancholy story. She is now nearly ripe for heaven; and may her bliss there be as endless and perfect, as here it was troubled and fearfully hurried to its close!

The holy Hermit.

Vol 1

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T Dighton.

Printed by C.Hullmandel.

THE MIRACLE

OF

THE HOLY HERMIT.

"There 's cold meat in the cave."—CYMBELINE.

THE MIRACLE

OF

THE HOLY HERMIT.

In my younger days, there was much talk of an old Hermit of great sanctity, who lived in a rocky cave near Naples. He had a very reverend grey beard, which reached down to his middle, where his body, looking like a pismire's, was almost cut in two by the tightness of a stout leathern girdle, which he wore probably to restrain his hunger during his long and frequent abstinences. His nails, besides, had grown long and crooked like the talons of a bird; his arms and legs were bare, and his brown garments very coarse and ragged. He never tasted

flesh, but fed upon herbs and roots, and drank nothing but water; nor ever lodged any where, winter or summer, but in his bleak rocky cavern; above all, it was his painful custom to stand for hours together with his arms extended, in imitation of the holy cross, by way of penance and mortification for the sins of his body.

After many years spent in these austerities, he fell ill, towards the autumn, of a mortal disease, whereupon he was constantly visited by certain Benedictines and Cordeliers, who had convents in the neighbourhood; not so much as a work of charity and mercy, as that they were anxious to obtain his body, for they made sure that many notable miracles might be wrought at his tomb. Accordingly, they hovered about his death-bed of leaves, like so many ravens when they scent a prey, but more jealous of each other, till the pious Hermit's last breath at length took flight towards the skies.

As soon as he was dead, the two friars who were watching him, ran each to their several

convents, to report the event. The Cordelier, being swiftest of foot, was the first to arrive with his tidings, when he found his brethren just sitting down to their noontide meal; whereas, when the Benedictines heard the news, they were at prayers, which gave them the advantage. Cutting the service short, therefore, with an abrupt amen, they ran instantly in a body to the cave; but before they could well fetch their breath again, the Cordeliers also came up, finishing their dinner as they ran, and both parties ranged themselves about the dead Hermit. Father Gometa, a Cordelier, and a very portly man, then stepping in front of his fraternity, addressed them as follows:

"My dear brethren, we are too late, as you see, to receive the passing breath of the holy man; he is quite dead and cold. Put your victuals out of your hands, therefore, and with all due reverence assist me to carry these saintly relics to our convent, that they may repose amongst his fellow Cordeliers."

The Benedictines murmuring at this expression; "Yea," added he, "I may truly call him a Cordelier, and a rigid one; witness his leathern girdle, which, for want of a rope, he hath belted round his middle, almost to the cutting asunder of his holy body. Take up, I say, these precious relics;" whereupon his followers obeying his commands, and the Benedictines resisting them, there arose a lively struggle, as if between so many Greeks and Trojans, over the dead body. The two fraternities, however, being equally matched in strength, they seemed more likely to dismember the Hermit, than to carry him off on either side, wherefore Father Gometa, by dint of entreaties and struggling, procured a truce. "It was a shameful thing," he told them, "for servants of the Prince of Peace, as they were, to mingle in such an affray; and besides, that the country people being likely to witness it, the scandal of such a broil would do more harm to them, jointly, than the possession of the body could be a benefit to either of their

orders. The religious men, of both sides, concurring in the prudence of this advice, they left a friar, on either part, to take charge of the dead body, and then adjourned, by common consent, to the house of the Benedictines.

The chapel being very large and convenient for the purpose, they went thither to carry on the debate; and, surely, such a strange kind of service had never been performed before within its walls. Father Gometa, standing beside a painted window, which made his face of all manner of hues, began in a pompous discourse to assert the claims of his convent; but Friar John quickly interrupted him; and another brother contradicting Friar John, all the monks, Benedictines as well as Cordeliers, were soon talking furiously together, at the same moment. Their Babel-arguments, therefore, were balanced against each other. At last, brother Geronimo, who had a shrill voice like a parrot's, leaped upon a bench, and called out for a hearing; and, moreover, clapping

two large missals together, in the manner of a pair of castanets, he dinned the other noise-mongers into a temporary silence. As soon as they were quiet—" This squabble," said he, " may easily be adjusted. As for the hermit's body, let those have it, of whatever order, who have ministered to the good man's soul, and given him the extreme unction."

At this proposal there was a general silence throughout the chapel; till Father Gometa, feeling what a scandal it would be if such a man had died without the last sacrament, affirmed that he had given to him the wafer; and Father Philippo, on behalf of the Benedictines, declared that he had performed the same office. Thus, that seemed to have been superfluously repeated, which, in truth, had been altogether omitted. Wherefore Geronimo, at his wit's end, proposed that the superiors should draw lots, and had actually cut a slip or two out of the margin of his psalter for the purpose; but Father Gometa relied too much on his

own subtlety, to refer the issue to mere chance. In this extremity, a certain Capuchin happening to be present, they besought him, as a neutral man and impartial, to lead them to some decision; and after a little thinking, he was so fortunate as to bring them to an acceptable method of arbitration.

The matter being thus arranged, the Cordeliers returned to their own convent, where, as soon as they arrived, Father Gometa assembled them all in the refectory, and spoke to them in these words:

"You have heard it settled, my brethren, that the claims of our several convents are to be determined by propinquity to the cave. Now I know that our crafty rivals will omit no artifice that may show their house to be the nearest; wherefore, not to be wilfully duped, I am resolved to make a proper subtraction from our own measurements. I foresee, notwithstanding, that this measuring bout will lead to no accommodation; for the

reckonings on both sides being false, will certainly beget a fresh cavil. Go, therefore, some of you, very warily, and bring hither the blessed body of the hermit, which, by God's grace, will save a great deal of indecent dissension, and then the Benedictines may measure as unfairly as they please."

The brethren approving of this design, chose out four of the stoutest, amongst whom was Friar Francis, to proceed on this expedition; and in the meantime, the event fell out as the superior had predicted. The adverse measurers, encountering on their task, began to wrangle; and after belabouring each other with their rods, returned with complaints to their separate convents; but Friar Francis, with his comrades, proceeded prosperously to the cave, where they found the dead body of the hermit, but neither of the truant friars who had been appointed to keep watch.

Taking the carcase, therefore, without any obstruction, on their shoulders, they began to

wend homewards very merrily, till coming to a bye-place in the middle of a wood, they agreed to set down their burthen awhile, and refresh themselves after their labours. One of the friars, however, of weaker nerves than the rest, objected to the companionship of the dead hermit, who with his long white beard and his ragged garments, which stirred now and then in the wind, was in truth a very awful object. Dragging him aside, therefore, into a dark solitary thicket, they returned to sit down on the grass; and pulling out their flasks, which contained some very passable wine, they began to enjoy themselves without stint or hindrance.

The last level rays of the setting sun were beginning to shoot through the horizontal boughs, tinging the trunks, which at noon are all shady and obscure, with a flaming gold; but the merry friars thought it prudent to wait till night-fall, before they ventured with their charge beyond the friendly shelter of the

wood. As soon, therefore, as it was so safely dark that they could barely distinguish each other, they returned to the thicket for the body; but to their horrible dismay, the dead hermit had vanished, nobody knew whither, leaving them only a handful of his grey beard, as a legacy, with a remnant or two of his tattered garments. At this discovery, the friars were in despair, and some of them began to weep, dreading to go back to the convent; but Friar Francis, being in a jolly mood, put them in better heart.

"Why, what a whimpering is this," said he, "about a dead body? The good father, as you know, was no fop, and did not smell over purely; for which reason, doubtless, some hungry devil of a wolf has relieved us from the labour of bearing him any farther. There is no such heretic as your wolf is, who would not be likely to boggle at his great piety, though I marvel he did not object to his meagreness. I tell you, take courage, then,

and trust to me to clear you, who have brought you out of fifty such scrapes."

The friars knowing that he spoke reasonably, soon comforted themselves; and running back to the convent, they repaired, all trembling, into the presence of the superior.

Father Gometa, inquiring eagerly if they had brought the body, Friar Francis answered boldly, that they had not; "But here," said he, "is a part of his most reverend beard, and also his mantle, which, like Elisha, he dropped upon us as he ascended into heaven; for as the pious Elisha was translated into the skies, even so was the holy hermit, excepting these precious relics—being torn out of our arms, as it were by a whirlwind." Anon, appealing to his comrades, to confirm his fabrication, they declared that it happened with them even as he related; and moreover, that a bright and glorious light shining upon them, as it did upon Saul and his company, when they journeyed to Damascus, had so bewil-

dered them, that they had not yet recovered their perfect senses.

In this plausible manner, the friars got themselves dismissed without any penance; but Father Gometa discredited the story at the bottom of his heart, and went to bed in great trouble of mind, not doubting that they had lost the body by some negligence, and that on the morrow it would be found in the possession of his rivals, the Benedictines. The latter, however, proving as disconcerted as he was, he took comfort, and causing the story to be set down at large in the records of the convent, and subscribed with the names of the four friars, he had it read publicly on the next Sunday from the pulpit, with an exhibition of the beard and the mantle, which procured a great deal of wonder and reverence amongst the congregation.

The Benedictines at first were vexed at the credit which was thus lost to their own convent; but being afterwards pacified with a

portion of the grey hairs and a shred or two of the brown cloth, they joined in the propagation of the story; and the country people believe to this day in the miracle of the holy hermit.

THE WIDOW OF GALICIA.

——— Sirs, behold in me
A wretched fraction of divided love,
A widow much deject;
Whose life is but a sorry ell of crape,
Ev'n cut it when you list.

OLD PLAY.

THE

WIDOW OF GALICIA.

There lived in the Province of Galicia, a lady so perfectly beautiful, that she was called by travellers, and by all indeed who beheld her, the Flower of Spain. It too frequently happens that such handsome women are but as beautiful weeds, useless or even noxious; whereas with her excelling charms, she possessed all those virtues which should properly inhabit in so lovely a person. She had therefore many wooers, but especially a certain old Knight of Castille, (bulky in person, and with hideously coarse features,) who, as he was exceedingly

wealthy, made the most tempting offers to induce her to become his mistress, and failing in that object by reason of her strict virtue, he proposed to espouse her. But she, despising him as a bad and brutal man, which was his character, let fall the blessing of her affection on a young gentleman of small estate but good reputation in the province, and being speedily married, they lived together for three years very happily. Notwithstanding this, the abominable Knight did not cease to persecute her, till being rudely checked by her husband, and threatened with his vengeance, he desisted for a season.

It happened at the end of the third year of their marriage, that her husband being unhappily murdered on his return from Madrid, whither he had been called by a lawsuit, she was left without protection, and from the failure of the cause much straitened, besides, in her means of living. This time, therefore, the Knight thought favourable to renew his importunities, and neither respecting the sacred-

ness of her grief, nor her forlorn state, he molested her so continually, that if it had not been for the love of her fatherless child, she would have been content to die. For if the Knight was odious before, he was now thrice hateful from his undisguised brutality, and above all execrable in her eyes, from a suspicion that he had procured the assassination of her dear husband. She was obliged, however, to confine this belief to her own bosom, for her persecutor was rich and powerful, and wanted not the means, and scarcely the will, to crush her. Many families had thus suffered by his malignity, and therefore she only awaited the arrangement of certain private affairs, to withdraw secretly, with her scanty maintenance, into some remote village. There she hoped to be free from her inhuman suitor; but she was delivered from this trouble in the meantime by his death, yet in so terrible a manner, as made it more grievous to her than his life had ever been.

It wanted, at this event, but a few days of

the time when the lady proposed to remove to her country-lodging, taking with her a maid who was called Maria; for since the reduction of her fortune, she had retained but this one servant. Now, it happened, that this woman going one day to her lady's closet, which was in her bed-chamber,—so soon as she had opened the door, there tumbled forward the dead body of a man; and the police being summoned by her shrieks, they soon recognized the corpse to be that of the old Castilian Knight, though the countenance was so blackened and disfigured as to seem scarcely human. It was sufficiently evident, that he had perished by poison; whereupon the unhappy lady, being interrogated, was unable to give any account of the matter; and in spite of her fair reputation, and although she appealed to God in behalf of her innocence, she was thrown into the common gaol along with other reputed murderers.

The criminal addresses of the deceased Knight being generally known, many persons

who believed in her guilt, still pitied her, and excused the cruelty of the deed on account of the persecution she had suffered from that wicked man:—but these were the most charitable of her judges. The violent death of her husband, which before had been only attributed to robbers, was now assigned by scandalous persons to her own act; and the whole province was shocked that a lady of her fair seeming, and of such unblemished character, should have brought so heavy a disgrace upon her sex and upon human nature.

At her trial, therefore, the court was crowded to excess; and some few generous persons were not without a hope of her acquittal; but the same facts, as before, being proved upon oath, and the lady still producing no justification, but only asserting her innocence, there remained no reasonable cause for doubting of her guilt. The Public Advocate then began to plead, as his painful duty commanded him, for her condemnation;—he urged the facts of

her acquaintance and bad terms with the murdered knight; and moreover, certain expressions of hatred which she had been heard to utter against him. The very scene and manner of his destruction, he said, spoke to her undoubted prejudice,—the first a private closet in her own bed-chamber,—and the last by poison, which was likely to be employed by a woman, rather than any weapon of violence. Afterwards, he interpreted to the same conclusion, the abrupt flight of the waiting-maid, who, like a guilty and fearful accomplice, had disappeared whenever her mistress was arrested; and, finally, he recalled the still mysterious fate of her late husband; so that all who heard him began to bend their brows solemnly, and some reproachfully, on the unhappy object of his discourse. Still she upheld herself, firmly and calmly, only from time to time lifting her eyes towards Heaven; but when she heard the death of her dear husband touched upon, and in a manner that laid his

blood to her charge, she stood forward, and placing her right hand on the head of her son, cried:—

"So witness God, if ever I shed his father's blood, so may this, his dear child, shed mine in vengeance."

Then sinking down from exhaustion, and the child weeping bitterly over her, the beholders were again touched with compassion, almost to the doubting of her guilt; but the evidence being so strong against her, she was immediately condemned by the Court.

It was the custom in those days for a woman who had committed murder, to be first strangled by the hangman, and then burnt to ashes in the midst of the market-place; but before this horrible sentence could be pronounced on the lady, a fresh witness was moved by the grace of God to come forward in her behalf. This was the waiting-woman, Maria, who hitherto had remained disguised in the body of the Court; but now being touched with remorse

at her lady's unmerited distresses, she stood up on one of the benches, and called out earnestly to be allowed to make her confession.—She then related, that she herself had been prevailed upon, by several great sums of money, and still more by the artful and seducing promises of the dead Knight, to secrete him in a closet in her lady's chamber; but that of the cause of his death she knew nothing, except that upon a shelf she had placed some sweet cakes, mixed with arsenic, to poison the rats, and that the Knight being rather gluttonous, might have eaten of them in the dark, and so died.

At this probable explanation, the people all shouted one shout, and the lady's innocence being acknowledged, the sentence was ordered to be reversed; but she reviving a little at the noise, and being told of this providence, only clasped her hands; and then, in a few words, commending her son to the guardianship of good men, and saying that she could never survive the shame of her unworthy reproach, she ended with a deep sigh, and expired upon the spot.

THE GOLDEN CUP

AND

THE DISH OF SILVER.

"*Bass.* If it please you to dine with us?
Shy. Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet, the Nazarite, conjured the Devil into."—*Merchant of Venice.*

The Cup of gold and the Dish of Silver.

Vol 1.

Designed and Drawn on Stone by T Dighton

Printed by [illegible]

THE GOLDEN CUP

AND

THE DISH OF SILVER.

Every one knows what a dog's life the miserable Jews lead all over the world, but especially amongst the Turks, who plunder them of their riches, and slay them on the most frivolous pretences. Thus, if they acquire any wealth, they are obliged to hide it in holes and corners, and to snatch their scanty enjoyments by stealth, in recompense of the buffets and contumely of their turbaned oppressors.

In this manner lived Yussuf, a Hebrew of great wealth and wisdom, but, outwardly, a poor beggarly druggist, inhabiting, with his wife,

Anna, one of the meanest houses in Constantinople. The curse of his nation had often fallen bitterly upon his head; his great skill in medicine procuring him some uncertain favour from the Turks, but on the failure of his remedies, a tenfold proportion of ill-usage and contempt. In such cases, a hundred blows on the soles of his feet were his common payment; whereas on the happiest cures, he was often dismissed with empty hands and some epithet of disgrace.

As he was sitting one day at his humble door, thinking over these miseries, a Janizary came up to him, and commanded Yussuf to go with him to his Aga or captain, whose palace was close at hand. Yussuf's gold immediately weighed heavy at his heart, as the cause of this summons; however, he arose obediently, and followed the soldier to the Aga, who was sitting cross-legged on a handsome carpet, with his long pipe in his mouth. The Jew, casting himself on his knees, with his face to the floor,

began, like his brethren, to plead poverty in excuse for the shabbiness of his appearance; but the Aga interrupting him, proceeded to compliment him in a flattering strain on his reputation for wisdom, which he said had made him desirous of his conversation. He then ordered the banquet to be brought in; whereupon the slaves put down before them some wine, in a golden cup, and some pork, in a dish of silver; both of which were forbidden things, and therefore made the Jew wonder very much at such an entertainment. The Aga then pointing to the refreshments addressed him as follows:—

"Yussuf, they say you are a very wise and learned man, and have studied deeper than any one the mysteries of nature. I have sent for you, therefore, to resolve me on certain doubts concerning this flesh, and this liquor before us; the pork being as abominable to your religion, as the wine is unto ours. But I am especially curious to know the reasons why your prophet

should have forbidden a meat, which by report of the Christians is both savoury and wholesome; wherefore I will have you to proceed first with that argument; and, in order that you may not discuss it negligently, I am resolved in case you fail to justify the prohibition, that you shall empty the silver dish before you stir from the place. Nevertheless, to show you that I am equally candid, I promise, if you shall thereafter prove to me the unreasonableness of the injunction against wine, I will drink off this golden goblet as frankly before we part."

The terrified Jew understood very readily the purpose of this trial; however, after a secret prayer to Moses, he began in the best way he could to plead against the abominable dish that was steaming under his nostrils. He failed, notwithstanding, to convince the sceptical Aga, who, therefore, commanded him to eat up the pork, and then begin his discourse in favour of the wine.

The sad Jew, at this order, endeavoured to move the obdurate Turk by his tears; but the Aga was resolute, and drawing his crooked cimetar, declared, " that if Yussuf did not instantly fall to, he would smite his head from his shoulders."

It was time, at this threat, for Yussuf to commend his soul unto Heaven, for in Turkey the Jews wear their heads very loosely; however, by dint of fresh tears and supplications he obtained a respite of three days, to consider if he could not bring forward any further arguments.

As soon as the audience was over, Yussuf returned disconsolately to his house, and informed his wife Anna of what had passed between him and the Aga. The poor woman foresaw clearly how the matter would end; for it was aimed only at the confiscation of their riches. She advised Yussuf, therefore, instead of racking his wits for fresh arguments, to carry a bag of gold to the Aga, who condescended to

receive his reasons; and after another brief discourse, to grant him a respite of three days longer. In the same manner, Yussuf procured a further interval, but somewhat dearer; so that in despair at losing his money at this rate, he returned for the fourth time to the palace.

The Aga and Yussuf being seated as before, with the mess of pork and the wine between them, the Turk asked, if he had brought any fresh arguments. The doctor replied, "Alas! he had already discussed the subject so often, that his reasons were quite exhausted;" whereupon the flashing cimetar leaping quickly out of its scabbard, the trembling Hebrew plucked the loathsome dish towards him, and with many struggles began to eat.

It cost him a thousand wry faces to swallow the first morsel; and from the laughter that came from behind a silken screen, they were observed by more mockers besides the Aga, who took such a cruel pleasure in the amusement of his women, that Yussuf was com-

pelled to proceed even to the licking of the dish. He was then suffered to depart, without wasting any logic upon the cup of wine, which after his loathsome meal he would have been quite happy to discuss.

I guess not how the Jew consoled himself besides for his involuntary sin, but he bitterly cursed the cruel Aga and all his wives, who could not amuse their indolent lives with their dancing-girls and tale-tellers, but made merry at the expense of his soul. His wife joined heartily in his imprecations; and both putting ashes on their heads, they mourned and cursed together till the sunset. There came no Janizary, however, on the morrow, as they expected; but on the eighth day, Yussuf was summoned again to the Aga.

The Jew at this message began to weep, making sure, in his mind, that a fresh dish of pork was prepared for him; however, he repaired obediently to the palace, where he was told, that the favourite lady of the harem was

indisposed, and the Aga commanded him to prescribe for her. Now, the Turks are very jealous of their mistresses, and disdain, especially, to expose them to the eyes of infidels, of whom the Jews are held the most vile;—wherefore, when Yussuf begged to see his patient, she was allowed to be brought forth only in a long white veil, that reached down to her feet. The Aga, notwithstanding the folly of such a proceeding, forbade her veil to be lifted; neither would he permit the Jew to converse with her, but commanded him on pain of death to return home and prepare his medicines.

The wretched doctor, groaning all the way, went back to his house, without wasting a thought on what drugs he should administer on so hopeless a case; but considering, instead, the surgical practice of the Aga, which separated so many necks. However, he told his wife of the new jeopardy he was placed in for the Moorish Jezabel.

"A curse take her!" said Anna; "give her a dose of poison, and let her perish before his eyes."

"Nay," answered the Jew, "that will be to pluck the sword down upon our own heads; nevertheless, I will cheat the infidel's concubine with some wine, which is equally damnable to their souls; and may God visit upon their conscience the misery they have enforced upon mine!"

In this bitter mood, going to a filthy hole in the floor, he drew out a flask of schiraz; and bestowing as many Hebrew curses on the liquor, as the Mussulmen are wont to utter of blessings over their medicines, he filled up some physic bottles, and repaired with them to the palace.

And now let the generous virtues of good wine be duly lauded for the happy sequel!

The illness of the favourite, being merely a languor and melancholy, proceeding from the voluptuous indolence of her life, the draughts

of Yussuf soon dissipated her chagrin, in such a miraculous manner, that she sang and danced more gaily than any of her slaves. The Aga, therefore, instead of beheading Yussuf, returned to him all the purses of gold he had taken; to which the grateful lady, besides, added a valuable ruby; and, thenceforward, when she was ill, would have none but the Jewish physician.

Thus, Yussuf saved both his head and his money; and, besides, convinced the Aga of the virtues of good wine; so that the golden cup was finally emptied, as well as the dish of silver.

THE

TRAGEDY OF SEVILLE.

" When I awoke
Before the dawn, amid their sleep I heard
My sons (for they were with me) weep and ask
For bread." *Cary's Dante.*

THE

TRAGEDY OF SEVILLE.

Every one, in Seville, has heard of the famous robber Bazardo; but, as some may be ignorant of one of the most interesting incidents of his career, I propose to relate a part of his history as it is attested in the criminal records of that city.

This wicked man was born in the fair city of Cadiz, and of very obscure parentage; but the time which I mean to speak of is, when he returned to Seville, after being some years absent in the Western Indies, and with a fortune which, whether justly or unjustly acquired,

sufficed to afford him the rank and apparel of a gentleman.

It was then, as he strolled up one of the bye-streets, a few days after his arrival, that he was attracted by a very poor woman, gazing most anxiously and eagerly at a shop-window. She was lean and famished, and clad in very rags, and made altogether so miserable an appearance, that even a robber, with the least grace of charity in his heart, would have instantly relieved her with an alms. The robber, however, contented himself with observing her motions at a distance, till at last, casting a fearful glance behind her, the poor famished wretch suddenly dashed her withered arm through a pane of the window, and made off with a small coarse loaf. But whether, from the feebleness of hunger or affright, she ran so slowly, it cost Bazardo but a moment's pursuit to overtake her, and seizing her by the arm, he began, thief as he was, to upbraid her, for making so free with another's property.

The poor woman made no reply, but uttered a short shrill scream, and threw the loaf, unperceived, through a little casement, and then turning a face full of hunger and fear, besought Bazardo, for charity's sake and the love of God, to let her go free. She was no daily pilferer, she told him, but a distressed woman, who could relate to him a story, which if it did not break her own heart in the utterance, must needs command his pity. But he was no way moved by her appeal; and the baker coming up and insisting on the restoration of the loaf, to which she made no answer but by her tears, they began to drag her away between them, and with as much violence as if she had been no such skeleton as she appeared.

By this time a crowd had assembled, and beholding this inhumanity, and learning besides the trifling amount of the theft, they bestowed a thousand curses, and some blows too, on Bazardo and the baker. These hard-hearted men, however, maintained their hold; and the

office of police being close by, the poor wretched creature was delivered to the guard, and as the magistrates were then sitting, the cause was presently examined.

During the accusation of Bazardo the poor woman stood utterly silent, till coming to speak of her abusive speech, and of the resistance which she had made to her capture, she suddenly interrupted him, and lifting up her shrivelled hands and arms towards heaven, inquired if those poor bones, which had not strength enough to work for her livelihood, were likely weapons for the injury of any human creature.

At this pathetic appeal, there was a general murmur of indignation against the accuser, and the charge being ended, she was advised that as only one witness had deposed against her, she could not be convicted, except upon her own confession. But she scorning to shame the truth, or to wrong even her accuser, for the people were ready to believe that he had im-

peached her falsely, freely admitted the theft, adding, that under the like necessity she must needs sin again; and with that, hiding her face in her hands, she sobbed out, "My children!—Alas! for my poor children!"

At this exclamation the judge even could not contain his tears, but told her with a broken voice that he would hear nothing further to her own prejudice; expressing, moreover, his regret, that the world possessed so little charity, as not to have prevented the mournful crime which she had committed. Then, desiring to know more particulars of her condition, she gratefully thanked him, and imploring the blessing of God upon all those who had shown so much sweet charity on her behalf, she began to relate her melancholy history.

"She was the daughter, she said, of a wealthy merchant at Cadiz, and had been instructed in all accomplishments that belong to a lady. That having listened unhappily to the flatteries

of an officer in the King's guard, she had married him, and bestowed upon him all her fortune; but that instead of being grateful for these benefits, he had expended her property in riotous living; and, finally, deserted her with her two children, to the care of him that feedeth the ravens." Here her voice becoming more tremulous, and almost inaudible, she excused herself, saying, that for two whole days she had not tasted of any food, and must needs have perished, but that by God's good grace she had then caught a rat, which served her, loathsome as it was, for a meal.

Hereupon, the Judge was exceedingly shocked, and immediately gave orders for some refreshments; but she declined to touch them, saying, that whilst her children were in want she could not eat; but with his gracious permission would only rest her head upon her hands. And so she sate down in silence, whilst all the people contemplated her with pity, still beautiful in her misery, and reduced

from a luxurious condition to so dreadful an extremity.

In the meantime, the officers were despatched by the judge's direction, to bring hither the children; and after resting for a little while, the unfortunate lady resumed her story. "For two years, she said, she had maintained herself and her little ones by her skill in embroidery and other works of art; but afterwards, falling ill, from her over-exertion and concealed sorrows, her strength had deserted her; and latterly, having no other resource, she had been obliged to sell her raiment. At last, she had nothing left but the poor rags she at present wore, besides her wedding ring; and that she would sooner die than part with. For I still live," she added, "in the hope of my husband's return to me,—and then, may God forgive thee, Bazardo, as I will forgive thee, for all this cruel misery."

At the mention of this name, her accuser turned instantly to the complexion of marble,

and he would fain have made his escape from the court; but the crowd pressing upon him, as if willing that he should hear the utmost of a misery for which he had shown so little compassion, he was compelled to remain in his place. He flattered himself, notwithstanding, that by reason of the alteration in his features, from his living in the Indies, he should still be unrecognized by the object of his cruelty; whereas, the captain of the vessel which had brought him over, was at that moment present; and wondering that his ship had come safely with so wicked a wretch on board, he instantly denounced Bazardo by name, and pointed him out to the indignation of the people.

At this discovery there was a sudden movement amongst the crowd; and in spite of the presence of the judge, and of the entreaties of the wretched lady herself, the robber would have been torn into as many pieces as there

were persons in the court, except for the timely interposition of the guard.

In the meantime, the officers who had been sent for the children, had entered by the opposite side of the hall, and making way towards the judge, and depositing somewhat upon the table, before it could be perceived what it was, they covered it over with a coarse linen cloth. Afterwards, being interrogated, they declared, that having proceeded whither they had been directed, they heard sounds of moaning, and sobbing, and lamentations, in a child's voice. That entering, upon this, and beholding one child bending over another and weeping bitterly, they supposed the latter to have died of hunger; but on going nearer, they discovered that it had a large wound on the left side, and that it was then warm and breathing, but was since dead. They pointed, as they said this, to the body on the table, where the blood was now beginning to ooze visibly

through the linen cloth. As for the manner of its being wounded, or the author, they could give no evidence; not only because the house was otherwise uninhabited, but that the remaining child was so affrighted, or so stricken with grief, that it could give no account of the occurrence. His cries, indeed, at this moment, resounded from the adjoining corridor; and the mother, staring wildly around her, and beholding that which lay upon the table, suddenly snatched away the cloth, and so exposed the body of the dead child. It was very lean and famished, with a gaping wound on its left bosom; from which the blood trickled even to the clerk's desk, so that the paper, which contained the record of the lady's sorrows, was stained with this new sad evidence of her misfortunes.

The people at this dreadful sight uttered a general moan of horror, and the mother made the whole court re-echo with her shrieks; insomuch, that some from mere anguish ran

out of the hall, whilst others stopped their ears with their hands, her cries were so long and piercing. At last, when she could scream no longer, but lay as one dead, the judge rose up, and commanding the other child to be brought in, and the dead body to be removed out of sight, he endeavoured, partly by soothing, and partly by threats, to draw forth the truth of what had been hitherto an incomprehensible mystery.

For a long time, the poor child, being famished and spiritless, made no answer, but only sobbed and trembled, as if his little joints would fall asunder; till at last, being re-assured by the judge, and having partaken of some wine, he began to relate what had happened. His mother, early in the morning, had promised them some bread; but being a long time absent, and he and his little brother growing more and more hungry, they lay down upon the floor and wept. That whilst they cried, a small loaf—very small indeed, was thrown in

at the window; and both being almost famished, and both struggling together to obtain it, he had unwarily stabbed his little brother with a knife which he held in his hand. And with that, bursting afresh into tears, he besought the judge not to hang him.

All this time, the cruel Bazardo remained unmoved; and the judge reproaching him in the sternest language, ordered him to be imprisoned. He then lamented afresh, that the dearth of Christian charity and benevolence was accountable for such horrors as they had witnessed; and immediately, the people, as if by consent, began to offer money, and some their purses, to the unfortunate lady. But she, heedless of them all, and exclaiming that she would sell her dead child for no money, rushed out into the street; and there repeating the same words, and at last sitting down, she expired, a martyr to hunger and grief, on the steps of her own dwelling.

THE

LADY IN LOVE WITH ROMANCE.

"Go, go thy ways, as changeable a baggage
As ever cozen'd Knight."—*Witch of Edmonton.*

THE

LADY IN LOVE WITH ROMANCE.

Many persons in Castille remember the old Knight Pedro de Peubla,—surnamed The Gross. In his person, he was eminently large and vulgar, with a most brutal countenance; and in his disposition so coarse and gluttonous, and withal so great a drunkard, that if one could believe in a transmigration of beasts, the spirit of a swine had passed into this man's body, for the discredit of human nature.

Now, truly, this was a proper suitor for the Lady Blanche, who, besides the comeliness of her person, was adorned with all those accomplish-

ments which become a gentlewoman: she was moreover gifted with a most excellent wit; so that she not only played on the guitar and various musical instruments to admiration, but also she enriched the melody with most beautiful verses of her own composition. Her father, a great man, and very proud besides of the nobility of his blood, was not insensible of these her rare merits, but declaring that so precious a jewel deserved to be richly set in gold, and that rather than marry her below her estate he would devote her to a life of perpetual celibacy, he watched her with the vigilance of an Argus. To do them justice, the young gentlemen of the province omitted no stratagem to gain access to her presence, but all their attempts were as vain as the grasping at water; and at length her parent becoming more and more jealous of her admirers, she was confined to the solitude of her own chamber.

It was in this irksome seclusion that, reading

constantly in novels and such works which refer to the ages of chivalry, she became suddenly smitten with such a new passion for the romantic, talking continually of knights and squires, and stratagems of love and war, that her father, doubting whither such a madness might tend, gave orders that all books should be removed from her chamber.

It was a grievous thing to think of that young lady, cheerful and beautiful as the day, confined thus, like a wild bird to an unnatural cage, and deprived of the common delights of liberty and nature. At length, that old Knight of Castille, coming, not with rope-ladders, nor disguised in woman's apparel, like some adventurers, but with a costly equipage, and a most golden reputation, he was permitted to lay his large person at her feet, and, contrary to all expectation, was regarded with an eye of favour.

At the first report of his reception, no one could sufficiently marvel how, in a man of

such a countenance, she could behold any similarity with those brave and comely young cavaliers, who, it was thought, must have risen out of their graves in Palestine to behold such a wooer; but when they called to mind her grievous captivity, and how hopeless it was that she could be freed by any artifice from the vigilance of her father, they almost forgave her that she was ready to obtain her freedom by bestowing her hand on a first cousin to the Devil. A certain gallant gentleman, however, who was named Castello, was so offended by the news, that he would have slain the Knight, without any concern for the consequences to himself; but the Lady Blanche, hearing of his design, made shift to send him a message, that by the same blow he would wound her quiet for ever.

In the mean time her father was overjoyed at the prospect of so rich a son-in-law as the Knight; for he was one of those parents, that would bestow their children upon Midas himself,

notwithstanding that they should be turned into sordid gold at the first embrace. In a transport of joy, therefore, he made an unusual present of valuable jewels to his daughter, and told her withal, that in any reasonable request he would instantly indulge her. This liberal promise astonished Blanche not a little; but after a moment's musing she made answer.

"You know, Sir," she said, "my passion for romance, and how heartily I despise the fashion of these degenerate days, when every thing is performed in a dull formal manner, and the occurrence of to-day is but a pattern for the morrow. There is nothing done now so romantically as in those delightful times, when you could not divine, in one hour, the fate that should befal you in the next, as you may read of in those delicious works of which you have so cruelly deprived me. I beg, therefore, as I have so dutifully consulted your satisfaction in the choice of a husband, that you will so far indulge me, as to leave the manner of our marriage to

my own discretion, which is, that it may be on the model of that in the history of Donna Eleanora, in which novel, if you remember, the lady being confined by her father as I am, contrives to conceal a lover in her closet, and making their escape together by a rope-ladder, they are happily united in marriage."

"Now, by the Holy Virgin!" replied her father, "this thing shall never be;" and foreseeing a thousand difficulties, and above all that the Knight would be exceeding adverse to his part in the drama, he repented a thousand times over of the books which had filled her with such preposterous fancies. The lady, notwithstanding, was resolute; and declaring that otherwise she would kill herself rather than be crossed in her will, the old miser reluctantly acceded to her scheme. Accordingly it was concerted that the next evening, at dusk, the Knight should come and play his serenade under her lattice, whereupon, hearing his most ravishing music, she was to let fall a ladder of ropes, and so admit him to

her chamber ; her father, moreover, making his nightly rounds, she was to conceal her lover in her closet, and then, both descending by the ladder together, they were to take flight on a pair of fleet horses, which should be ready at the garden gate.

"And now," said she, "if you fail me in the smallest of these particulars, the Knight shall never have of me so much as a ring may embrace," and with this injunction they severally awaited the completion of their drama.

The next night, the Lady Blanche watched at her window, and in due season the Knight came with his twangling guitar; but, as if to make her sport of him for the last time, she affected to mistake his music.

"Ah !" she cried, "here is a goodly serenade to sing one awake with; I prythee go away a mile hence, with thy execrable voice, or I will have thee answered with an arquebuss."

All this time the Knight fretted himself into a violent rage, stamping and blaspheming all

the blessed saints; but when he heard mention of the arquebuss, he made a motion to run away, which constrained the lady to recal him, and to cast him down the ladder without any further ado. It was a perilous and painful journey for him, you may be sure, to climb up to a single story; but at length with great labour he clambered into the balcony, and in a humour that went nigh to mar the most charming romance that was ever invented. In short, he vowed not to stir a step further in the plot: but Blanche, telling him that for this first and last time he must needs fulfil her will, which would so speedily be resolved into his own; and seducing him besides with some little tokens of endearment, he allowed himself to be locked up in her closet.

The lady then laid herself down in bed, and her father knocking at the door soon after, she called out that he was at liberty to enter. He came in then, very gravely, with a dark lan-

tern, and asking if his daughter was asleep, she replied that she was just on the skirts of a doze.

"Ah," quoth he, after bidding her a good night, "am I not a good father to humour thee thus, in all thy fantasies? In verity, I have forgotten the speech which I ought here to deliver; but pray look well to thy footing, Blanche, and keep a firm hold of the ladder, for else thou wilt have a deadly fall, and I would not have thee to damage my carnations."

Hereupon he departed; and going back to his own chamber, he could not help praising God that this troublesome folly was so nearly at an end. It only remained for him now to receive the letter, which was to be sent to him, as if to procure his fatherly pardon and benediction; and this, after a space, being brought to him by a domestic, he read as follows:—

"Sir,

"If you had treated me with loving-kindness as your daughter, I should most joy-

fully have reverenced you as my father: but, as you have always carried a purse where instead you ought to have worn a human heart, I have made free to bestow myself where that seat of love will not be wanting to my happiness. As for the huge Knight, whom you have thought fit to select for my husband, you will find him locked up in my closet. For the manner of my departure, I would not willingly have made you a party to your own disappointment; but that, from your excessive vigilance, it was hopeless for me to escape except by a ladder of your own planting. Necessity was the mother of my invention, and its father was Love. Excepting this performance, I was never romantic, and am not now; and, therefore, neither scorning your forgiveness, nor yet despairing at its denial, I am going to settle into that sober discretion which I hope is not foreign to my nature. Farewell.—Before you read this I am in the arms of my dear Josef Castello, a gentleman of such merit, that you

will regain more honour with such a son, than you can have lost in your undutiful daughter,

"BLANCHE."

On reading this letter, the old man fell into the most ungovernable rage, and releasing the Knight from the closet, they reproached each other so bitterly, and quarrelled so long, as to make it hopeless that they could overtake the fugitives, even had they known the direction of their flight.

In this pleasant manner, the Lady Blanche of Castille made her escape from an almost hopeless captivity and an odious suitor; and the letter which she wrote is preserved unto this day, as an evidence of her wit. But her father never forgave her elopement; and when he was stretched even at the point of death, being importuned on this subject, he made answer that, "he could never forgive her, when he had never forgiven himself for her evasion." And with these words on his lips he expired.

THE

EIGHTH SLEEPER OF EPHESUS.

"Fie! this fellow would sleep out a Lapland night!"

THE

EIGHTH SLEEPER OF EPHESUS.

It happened one day, in a certain merry party of Genoese, that their conversation fell at last on the noted miracle of Ephesus. Most of the company treated the story of the Seven Sleepers as a pleasant fable, and many shrewd conceits and witty jests were passed on the occasion. Some of the gentlemen, inventing dreams for those drowsy personages, provoked much mirth by their allusions; whilst others speculated satirically on the changes in manners, which they must have remarked after their century of slumber—all of the listeners being

highly diverted, excepting one sober gentleman, who made a thousand wry faces at the discourse.

At length, taking an opportunity to address them, he lectured them very seriously in defence of the miracle, calling them so many heretics and infidels; and saying that he saw no reason why the history should not be believed as well as any other legend of the holy fathers. Then, after many other curious arguments, he brought the example of the dormouse, which sleeps throughout a whole winter, affirming, that the Ephesian Christians, being laid in a cold place, like a rocky cavern or a sepulchre, might reasonably have remained torpid for a hundred years.

His companions, feigning themselves to be converted, flattered him on to proceed in a discourse which was so diverting, some of them replenishing his glass continually with wine—of which, through talking till he became thirsty, he partook very freely. At last after

uttering a volume of follies and extravagances, he dropped his head upon the table and fell into a profound doze; during which interval, his merry companions plotted a scheme against him, which they promised themselves would afford some excellent sport. Carrying him softly therefore to an upper chamber, they laid him upon an old bed of state, very quaintly furnished and decorated in the style of the gothic ages. Thence repairing to a private theatre in the house, which belonged to their entertainer, they arrayed themselves in some Bohemian habits, very grotesque and fanciful, and disguised their faces with paint; and then sending one of their number to keep watch in the bed-chamber, they awaited in this masquerade the awaking of the credulous sleeper.

In an hour or thereabouts, the watcher, perceiving that the other began to yawn, ran instantly to his comrades, who, hurrying up to the chamber, found their Ephesian sitting upright in bed, and wondering about him at its

uncouth mouldering furniture. One of them then speaking for the rest, began to congratulate him on his revival out of so tedious a slumber, persuading him, by help of the others and a legion of lies, that he had slept out a hundred years. He thereupon asking them who they were, they answered they were his dutiful great grandchildren, who had kept watch over him by turns ever since they were juveniles. In proof of this, they showed him how dilapidated the bed had become since he had slept in it, nobody daring to remove him against the advice of the physicians.

"I perceive it well," said he, "the golden embroideries are indeed very much tarnished—and the hangings in truth, as tattered as any of our old Genoese standards that were carried against the Turks. These faded heraldries too, upon the head-cloth, have been thoroughly fretted by the moths. I notice also, my dear great grandchildren, by your garments, how much the fashions have altered since my time,

though you have kept our ancient language very purely, which is owing of course to the invention of printing. The trees, likewise, and the park, I observe, have much the same appearance that I remember a century since—but the serene aspect of nature does not alter so constantly like our frivolous human customs."

Then recollecting himself, he began to make inquiries concerning his former acquaintance, and in particular about one Giacoppo Rossi—the same wag that in his mummery was then standing before him. They told him he had been dead and buried, fourscore years ago.

"Now, God be praised!" he answered; "for that same fellow was a most pestilent coxcomb, who, pretending to be a wit, thought himself licensed to ridicule men of worth and gravity with the most shameful buffooneries. The world must have been much comforted by his death, and especially if he took with him his fellow mountebank, Guidolphi, who was as laborious a jester, but duller."

In this strain, going through the names of all those that were with him in the room, he praised God heartily that he was rid of such a generation of knaves and fools and profane heretics; and then recollecting himself afresh,

"Of course, my great grandchildren," said he, "I am a widower?"

His wife, who was amongst the maskers, at this question began to prick up her ears, and answering for herself, she said,

"Alas! the good woman that was thy partner has been dead these seventy-three years, and has left thee desolate."

At this news the sleeper began to rub his hands together very briskly, saying, "Then there was a cursed shrew gone;" whereupon his wife striking him in a fury on the cheek, she let fall her mask through this indiscretion; and so awaked him out of his marvellous dream.

MADELINE.

One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons,
A natural perspective, that is, and is not.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

MADELINE.

THERE lived in Toledo a young gentleman, so passionately loved by a young lady of the same city, that on his sudden decease she made a vow to think of no other; and having neither relations nor friends, except her dear brother Juan, who was then abroad, she hired a small house, and lived almost the life of a hermit. Being young and handsome, however, and possessed besides of a plentiful fortune, she was much annoyed by the young gallants of the place, who practised so many stratagems to get speech of her, and molested her so continually, that to free herself from their importunities, both now and for the future, she exchanged her dress for a man's apparel, and

privately withdrew to another city. By favour of her complexion, which was a brunette's, and the solitary manner of her life, she was enabled to preserve this disguise; and it might have been expected that she would have met with few adventures; but on the contrary, she had barely sojourned a month in this new dwelling, and in this unwonted garb, when she was visited with still sterner inquietudes than in those she had so lately resigned.

As the beginning of her troubles, it happened, one evening, in going out a little distance, that she was delayed in the street by seeing a young woman, who, sitting on some stone steps, and with scanty rags to cover her, was nursing a beautiful infant at her breast and weeping bitterly. At this painful spectacle, the charitable Madeline immediately cast her purse into the poor mother's lap, and the woman eagerly seizing the gift, and clasping it to her bosom, began to implore the blessing of God upon so charitable and Christian-like

a gentleman. But an instant had scarcely been gone, when on looking up, and more completely discerning the countenance of her benefactor, she suddenly desisted.

"Ah, wretch!" she cried, "do you come hither to insult me? Go again to your false dice; and the curse of a wife and of a mother be upon you!" Then casting away the purse, and bending herself down over her child, and crying, "Alas! my poor babe, shall we eat from the hand that has ruined thy father;"—she resumed her weeping.

The tender Madeline was greatly afflicted at being so painfully mistaken; and hastening home, she deliberated with herself whether she should any longer retain an apparel which had subjected her to so painful an occurrence; but recalling her former persecutions, and trusting that so strange an adventure could scarcely befal her a second time, she continued in her masculine disguise. And now, thinking of the comfort and protection which her dear

brother Juan might be to her in such troubles, she became vehemently anxious for his return; and the more so, because she could obtain no tidings of him whatever. On the morrow, therefore, she went forth to make inquiry; and forsaking her usual road, and especially the quarter where she had encountered with that unfortunate woman, she trusted reasonably to meet with no other such misery.

Now it chanced that the road which she had chosen on this day led close beside a cemetery; and just at the moment when she arrived by the gates, there came also a funeral, so that she was obliged to stand aside during the procession. Madeline was much struck by the splendour of the escutcheons; but still more by the general expression of sorrow amongst the people; and inquiring of a bye-stander the name of the deceased:—"What!" said the man, "have ye not heard of the villanous murder of our good lord, the Don Felix de Castro?—the hot curse of God fall on the

wicked Cain that slew him!" and with that, he uttered so many more dreadful imprecations as made her blood run cold to hear him.

In the meantime, the mourners one by one had almost entered; and the last one was just stepping by, with her hands clasped and a countenance of the deepest sorrow, when casting her eyes on Madeline, she uttered a piercing shriek, and pointing with her finger, cried, "That is he, that is he who murdered my poor brother!"

At this exclamation, the people eagerly pressed towards the quarter whither she pointed; but Madeline, shrinking back from the piercing glance of the lady, was so hidden by the gate as to be unnoticed; and the next man being seized on suspicion, and a great tumult arising, she was enabled to make her escape. "Alas!" she sighed inwardly, "what sin have I committed, that this cruel fortune pursues me whithersoever I turn. Alas, what have I done;" and walking sorrowfully in these me-

ditations, she was suddenly accosted by a strange domestic.

" Senor," he said, " my lady desires most earnestly to see you; nay, you must needs come;" and thereupon leading the way into an ancient, noble-looking mansion, the bewildered Madeline, silent and wondering, was introduced to a large apartment. At the further end a lady attired in deep mourning, like a widow, was reclining on a black velvet sofa; the curtains were black, the pictures were framed also in black, and the whole room was so furnished in that dismal colour, that it looked like a very palace of grief.

At sight of Madeline, the lady rose hastily and ran a few steps forward; but her limbs failing, she stopped short, and rested with both hands on a little table which stood in the centre of the room. Her figure was tall and graceful, but so wasted, that it seemed as if it must needs bend to that attitude; and her countenance was so thin and pale, and yet withal so

beautiful, that Madeline could not behold it without tears of pity. After a pause, the lady cried in a low voice, " Ah, cruel, how could you desert me! See how I have grieved for you!" and therewith unbinding her hair, so that it fell about her face, it was as grey as in a woman of four-score!

" Alas!" she said, " it was black once, when I gave thee a lock for a keep-sake; but it was fitting it should change when thou hast changed;" and leaning her face on her hands she sobbed heavily.

At these words, the tender Madeline approached to console her; but the lady pushing her gently aside, exclaimed mournfully, " It is too late! it is too late now!" and then casting herself on the sofa, gave way to such a passion of grief, and trembled so exceedingly, that it seemed as if life and sorrow would part asunder on the spot. Madeline kneeling down, and swearing that she had never injured her, besought her to moderate a transport which broke

her heart only to gaze upon; and the lady moving her lips, but unable to make any reply, then drew from her bosom a small miniature; and sobbing out, "Oh, Juan, Juan!" hid her face again upon the cushion.

At sight of the picture, the miserable Madeline was in her own turn speechless; and remembering instantly the beggar and the mourner, whose mistakes were thus illustrated by the unhappy lady—she comprehended at once the full measure of her wretchedness. "Oh, Juan, Juan," she groaned, "is it thus horribly that I must hear of thee!" and stretching herself upon the carpet, she uttered such piercing cries, that the lady, alarmed by a grief which surpassed even her own, endeavoured to raise her, and happening to tear open the bosom of her dress, the sex of Madeline was discovered. "Alas, poor wretch! hast thou too been deceived," cried the lady—"and by the same false Juan;" and enfolding

Madeline in her arms, the two unfortunates wept together for the space of many minutes.

In the mean time, a domestic abruptly entered; and exclaiming that the murderer of Don Felix was condemned, and that he had seen him conducted to prison, he delivered into the hands of his mistress a fragment of a letter, which she read as follows:—

"Most dear and injured lady,

"Before this shocks your eyes, your ears will be stung with the news that it is I who have killed your kinsman; and knowing that by the same blow I have slain your peace, I am not less stained by your tears than by his blood which is shed. My wretched life will speedily make atonement for this last offence; but that I should have requited your admirable constancy and affection by so unworthy a return of cruelty and falsehood, is a crime that scorches up my tears before I can

shed them; and makes me so despair, that I cannot pray even on the threshold of death. And yet, I am not quite the wretch you may account me, except in misery; but desiring only to die as the most unhappy man in this unhappy world, I have withheld many particulars which might otherwise intercede for me with my judges. But I desire to die, and to pass away from both hatred and pity, if any such befal me; but above all, to perish from a remembrance whereof I am most unworthy: and when I am but a clod, and a poor remnant of dust, you may happily forgive, for mortality's sake, the many faults and human sins which did once inhabit it.

"I am only a few brief hours short of this consummation: and the life which was bestowed for your misery and mine will be extinguished for ever. My blood is running its last course through its veins—and the light and air of which all others so largely partake, is scantily measured out to me. Do not curse me—do

not forget that which you once were to me, though unrelated to my crimes; but if my name may still live where my lips have been, put your pardon into a prayer for my soul against its last sunrise. Only one more request. I have a sister in Toledo who tenderly loves me, and believes that I am still abroad. If it be a thing possible, confirm her still in that happy delusion—or tell her that I am dead, but not how. As I have concealed my true name, I hope that this deadly reproach may be spared to her, and now from the very confines of the grave—"

* * * * * *

It was a painful thing to hear the afflicted lady reading thus far betwixt her groans—but the remainder was written in so wavering a hand, and withal so stained and blotted, that, like the meaning of death itself, it surpassed discovery. At length, "Let me go," cried Madeline, "let me go and liberate him! If they

mistake me thus for my brother Juan, the gaoler will not be able to distinguish him from me, and in this manner he may escape and so have more years for repentance, and make his peace with God." Hereupon, wildly clapping her hands, as if for joy at this fortunate thought, she entreated so earnestly for a womanly dress that it was given to her, and throwing it over her man's apparel, she made the best of her way to the prison. But, alas! the countenance of the miserable Juan was so changed by sickness and sharp anguish of mind, that for want of a more happy token she was constrained to recognize him by his bonds. Her fond stratagem therefore would have been hopeless, if Juan besides had not been so resolute, as he was, in his opposition to her entreaties. She was obliged, therefore, to content herself with mingling tears with him till night, in his dungeon,—and then struggling, and tearing her fine hair, as though it had been guilty of her grief, she was removed from him

by main force, and in that manner conveyed back to the lady's residence.

For some hours she expended her breath only in raving and the most passionate arguments of distress,—but afterwards she became as fearfully calm, neither speaking, nor weeping, nor listening to what was addressed to her, merely remarking about midnight, that she heard the din of the workmen upon the scaffold—and which, though heard by no other person at so great a distance, was confirmed afterwards to have been a truth. In this state, with her eyes fixed and her lips moving, but without any utterance, she remained till morning in a kind of lethargy—and therein so much more happy than her unfortunate companion, who at every sound of the great bell which is always tolled against the death of a convict, started and sobbed and shook, as if each stroke was made against her own heart. But of Madeline, on the contrary, it was noted that even when the doleful procession was passing

immediately under the window at which she was present, she only shivered a little, as if at a cool breath of air, and then turning slowly away, and desiring to be laid in bed, she fell into a slumber, as profound nearly as death itself. But it was not her blessed fate to die so quickly, although on the next morning the unhappy partner of her grief was found dead upon her pillow, still and cold, and with so sorrowful an expression about her countenance, as might well rejoice the beholder that she was divorced from a life of so deep a trouble.

As for Madeline, she took no visible note of this occurrence, nor seemed to have any return of reason till the third day, when growing more and more restless, and at length wandering out into the city, she was observed to tear down one of the proclamations for the execution, which were still attached to the walls. After this, she was no more seen in the neighbourhood, and it was feared she had violently made away with her life; but by later accounts from Toledo, it

was ascertained that she had wandered back, bare-footed and quite a maniac, to that city.

She was for some years the wonder and the pity of its inhabitants, and when I have been in Toledo with my uncle Francis, I have seen this poor crazed Madeline, as they called her, with her long loose hair and her fine face, so pale and thin, and so calm-looking, that it seemed to be only held alive by her large black eyes. She was always mild and gentle, and if you provoked it, would freely converse with you; but oftentimes in the midst of her discourse, whether cheerful or sad, she would pause and sigh, and say in a different voice, "Oh, Juan, Juan!" and with these two words, simple though they be, she made every heart ache that heard her.

MASSETTO AND HIS MARE.

"Quit that form of a woman, and be turned instantly into a mare."—THE STORY OF BEDER, PRINCE OF PERSIA.

MASETTO AND HIS MARE.

It is remarkable, and hardly to be believed by those who have not studied the history of superstition, what extravagant fables may be imposed on the faith of the vulgar people; especially when such fables are rehearsed in print, which of itself has passed before now as the work of a black or magical art, and has still influence enough over ignorant minds, to make them believe, like Masetto, that a book of romances is a gospel.

This Masetto, like most other rustics, was a very credulous man; but more simple otherwise than country folks commonly appear,

who have a great deal of crafty instinct of their own, which comes to them spontaneously, as to the ravens and magpies. And whereas pastoral people are generally churlish and headstrong, and in spite of the antique poets, of coarse and brutal tempers, Masetto, on the contrary, was very gentle and mild, and so compassionate withal, that he would weep over a wounded creature like a very woman. This easy disposition made him liable to be tricked by any subtle knave that might think it worth his pains, and amongst such rogues there was none that duped him more notably than one Bruno Corvetto, a horse-courser, and as dishonest as the most capital of his trade. This fellow, observing that Masetto had a very good mare, which he kept to convey his wares to Florence, resolved to obtain her at the cheapest rate, which was by stratagem, and knowing well the simple and credulous character of the farmer, he soon devised a plan. Now Masetto was very tender to all dumb animals, and especially to his mare,

who was not insensible to his kindly usage, but pricked up her ears at the sound of his voice, and followed him here and there, with the sagacity and affection of a faithful dog, together with many other such tokens of an intelligence that has rarely belonged to her race. The crafty Corvetto, therefore, conceived great hopes of his scheme: accordingly, having planted himself in the road by which Masetto used to return home, he managed to fall into discourse with him about the mare, which he regarded very earnestly, and this he repeated for several days. At last Masetto observing that he seemed very much affected when he talked of her, became very curious about the cause, and inquired if it had ever been his good fortune to have such another good mare as his own; to this Corvetto made no reply, but throwing his arms about the mare's neck, began to hug her so lovingly, and with so many deep drawn sighs, that Masetto began to stare amazingly, and to cross himself as fast as he

could. The hypocritical Corvetto then turning away from the animal,—"Alas!" said he, "this beloved creature that you see before you is no mare, but an unhappy woman, disguised in this horrible brutal shape by an accursed magician. Heaven only knows in what manner my beloved wife provoked this infernal malice, but doubtless it was by her unconquerable virtue, which was rivalled only by the loveliness of her person. I have been seeking her in this shape, all over the wearisome earth, and now I have discovered her I have not wherewithal to redeem her of you, my money being all expended in the charges of travelling, otherwise I would take her instantly to the most famous wizard, Michael Scott, who is presently sojourning at Florence, and by help of his magical books might discover some charm to restore her to her natural shape." Then clasping the docile mare about the neck again, he affected to weep over her very bitterly.

The simple Masetto was very much disturbed

at this story, but knew not whether to believe it, till at last he bethought himself of the village priest, and proposed to consult him upon the case; and whether the lady, if there was one, might not be exorcised out of the body of his mare. The knavish Corvetto, knowing well that this would ruin his whole plot, was prepared to dissuade him. "You know," said he, "the vile curiosity of our country people, who would not fail at such a rumour to pester us out of our senses; and, especially, they would torment my unhappy wife, upon whom they would omit no experiment, however cruel, for their satisfaction. Besides, it would certainly kill her with grief, to have her disgrace so published to the world, which she cannot but feel very bitterly; for it must be a shocking thing for a young lady who has been accustomed to listen to the loftiest praises of her womanly beauty, to know herself thus horribly degraded in the foul body of a brute. Alas! who could think that her beautiful locks, which used

to shine like golden wires, are now turned by damnable magic into this coarse slovenly mane; —or her delicate white hands—oh! how pure and lily-like they were—into these hard and iron-shod hoofs!" The tender-hearted Masetto beginning to look very doleful at these exclamations, the knave saw that his performance began to take effect, and so begged no more for the present, than that Mazetto would treat his mare very kindly, and rub her teeth daily with a sprig of magical hornbeam, which the simple-witted rustic promised very readily to perform. He had, notwithstanding, some buzzing doubts in his head upon the matter, which Corvetto found means to remove by degrees, taking care, above all, to caress the unconscious mare whenever they met, and sometimes going half-privately to converse with her in the stable.

At last, Masetto being very much distressed by these proceedings, he addressed Corvetto as follows:—"I am at my 'wit's end about this

matter. I cannot find in my heart, from respect, to make my lady do any kind of rude work, so that my cart stands idle in the stable, and my wares are thus unsold, which is a state of things that I cannot very well afford. But, above all, your anguish whenever you meet with your poor wife is more than I can bear; it seems such a shocking and unchristian-like sin in me, for the sake of a little money, to keep you both asunder. Take her, therefore, freely of me as a gift; or if you will not receive her thus, out of consideration for my poverty, it shall be paid me when your lady is restored to her estates, and by your favour, with her own lily white hand. Nay, pray accept of her without a word; you must be longing, I know, to take her to the great wizard, Michael Scott; and in the mean time I will pray, myself, to the blessed saints and martyrs, that his charms may have the proper effect." The rogue, at these words, with undissembled joy fell about the mare's neck; and, taking her by the halter,

after a formal parting with Masetto, began to lead her gently away. Her old master, with brimful eyes, continued watching her departure till her tail was quite out of sight; whereupon, Corvetto leapt instantly on her back, and without stint or mercy began galloping towards Florence, where he sold her, as certain Saxons are recorded to have disposed of their wives, in the market-place.

Some time afterwards, Masetto repairing to Florence on a holiday, to purchase another horse for his business, he beheld a carrier in one of the streets, who was beating his jade very cruelly. The kind Masetto directly interfered in behalf of the ill-used brute,—which indeed, was his own mare, though much altered by hard labour and sorry diet,—and now got into a fresh scrape, with redoubled blows, through capering up to her old master. Masetto was much shocked, you may be sure, to discover the enchanted lady in such a wretched plight. But not doubting that she had been

stolen from her afflicted husband, he taxed the carrier very roundly with the theft, who laughed at him in his turn for a madman, and proved by three witnesses, that he had purchased the mare of Corvetto. Masetto's eyes were thus opened, but by a very painful operation. However, he purchased his mare again, without bargaining for either golden hair or lily-white hands, and with a heavy heart rode back again to his village. The inhabitants when he arrived, were met together on some public business; after which Masetto, like an imprudent man as he was, complained bitterly amongst his neighbours of his disaster. They made themselves, therefore, very merry at his expense, and the schoolmaster especially, who was reckoned the chiefest wit of the place. Masetto bore all their railleries with great patience, defending himself with many reasonable arguments—and at last he told them he would bring them in proof quite as wonderful a case. Accordingly, stepping back to his own house,

he returned with an old tattered volume, which Corvetto had bestowed on him, of the "Arabian Nights," and began to read to them the story of Sidi Nonman, whose wife was turned, as well as Corvetto's, into a beautiful mare. His neighbours laughing more lustily than ever at this illustration, and the schoolmaster crowing above them all, Masetto interrupted him with great indignation. "How is this, Sir," said he, "that you mock me so, whereas, I remember, that when I was your serving-man and swept out the school-room, I have overheard you teaching the little children concerning people in the old ages, that were half men and the other half turned into horses; yea, and showing them the effigies in a print, and what was there more impossible in this matter of my own mare?" The priest interposing at this passage, in defence of the schoolmaster, Masetto answered him as he had answered the pedagogue, excepting that instead of the Centaurs, he alleged a miracle out of the Holy Fathers, in proof of the powers of

magic. There was some fresh laughing at this rub of the bowls against the pastor, who being a Jesuit and a very subtle man, began to consider within himself whether it was not better for their souls, that his flock should believe by wholesale, than have too scrupulous a faith, and accordingly, after a little deliberation, he sided with Masetto. He engaged, moreover, to write for the opinion of his College, who replied, that as sorcery was a devilish and infernal art, its existence was as certain as the devil's.

Thus a belief in enchantment took root in the village, which in the end flourished so vigorously, that although the rustics could not be juggled out of any of their mares, they burned nevertheless a number of unprofitable old women.

THE STORY

OF

MICHEL ARGENTI.

—— View 'em well.
Go round about 'em, and still
View their faces; round about yet,
See how death waits upon 'em, for
Thou shalt never view 'em more.

ELDER BROTHER.

THE

STORY OF MICHEL ARGENTI.

Michel Argenti was a learned physician of Padua, but lately settled at Florence, a few years only before its memorable visitation, when the Destroying Angel brooded over that unhappy city, shaking out deadly vapours from its wings.

It must have been a savage heart indeed, that could not be moved by the shocking scenes that ensued from that horrible calamity, and which were fearful enough to overcome even the dearest pieties and prejudices of humanity; causing the holy ashes of the dead to be no longer vene-

rated, and the living to be disregarded by their nearest ties: the tenderest mothers forsaking their infants; wives flying from the sick couches of their husbands; and children neglecting their dying parents; when love closed the door against love, and particular selfishness took place of all mutual sympathies. There were some brave, humane spirits, nevertheless, that with a divine courage ventured into the very chambers of the sick, and contended over their prostate bodies with the common enemy; and amongst these was Argenti, who led the way in such works of mercy, till at last the pestilence stepped over his own threshold, and he was beckoned home by the ghastly finger of Death, to struggle with him for the wife of his own bosom.

Imagine him then, worn out in spirit and body, ministering hopelessly to her that had been dearer to him than health or life; but now, instead of an object of loveliness, a livid and ghastly spectacle, almost too loathsome to

look upon; her pure flesh being covered with blue and mortiferous blotches, her sweet breath changed into a fetid vapour, and her accents expressive only of anguish and despair. These doleful sounds were aggravated by the songs and festivities of the giddy populace, which, now the pestilence had abated, ascended into the desolate chamber of its last martyr, and mingled with her dying groans.

These ending on the third day with her life, Argenti was left to his solitary grief, the only living person in his desolate house; his servants having fled during the pestilence, and left him to perform every office with his own hands. Hitherto the dead had gone without their rites; but he had the melancholy satisfaction of those sacred and decent services for his wife's remains, which during the height of the plague had been direfully suspended; the dead bodies being so awfully numerous, that they defied a careful sepulture, but were thrown, by random and slovenly heaps, into great holes and ditches.

As soon as was prudent after this catastrophe, his friends repaired to him with his two little children, who had fortunately been absent in the country, and now returned with brave ruddy cheeks and vigorous spirits to his arms; but, alas! not to cheer their miserable parent, who thenceforward was never known to smile, nor scarcely to speak, excepting of the pestilence. As a person that goes forth from a dark sick chamber is still haunted by its glooms, in spite of the sunshine; so, though the plague had ceased, its horrors still clung about the mind of Argenti, and with such a deadly influence in his thoughts, as it bequeathes to the infected garments of the dead. The dreadful objects he had witnessed still walked with their ghostly images in his brain—his mind, in short, being but a doleful lazaretto devoted to pestilence and death. The same horrible spectres possessed his dreams; which he sometimes described as filled up from the same black source, and

thronging with the living sick he had visited, or the multitudinous dead corses, with the unmentionable and unsightly rites of their inhumation.

These dreary visions entering into all his thoughts, it happened often, that when he was summoned to the sick, he pronounced that their malady was the plague, discovering its awful symptoms in bodies where it had no existence ; but above all, his terrors were busy with his children, whom he watched with a vigilant and despairing eye ; discerning constantly some deadly taint in their wholesome breath, or declaring that he saw the plague-spot in their tender faces. Thus, watching them sometimes upon their pillows, he would burst into tears and exclaim that they were smitten with death ; in short, he regarded their blue eyes and ruddy cheeks but as the frail roses and violets that are to perish in a day, and their silken hair like the most brittle gossamers. Thus their exis-

tence, which should have been a blessing to his hopes, became a very curse to him through his despair.

His friends, judging rightly from these tokens that his mind was impaired, persuaded him to remove from a place which had been the theatre of his calamities, and served but too frequently to remind him of his fears. He repaired, therefore, with his children to the house of a kinswoman at Genoa; but his melancholy was not at all relieved by the change, his mind being now like a black Stygian pool that reflects not, except one dismal hue, whatever shifting colours are presented by the skies. In this mood he continued there five or six weeks, when the superb city was thrown into the greatest alarm and confusion. The popular rumour reported that the plague had been brought into the port by a Moorish felucca, whereupon the magistrates ordered that the usual precautions should be observed; so that although there was no

real pestilence, the city presented the usual appearances of such a visitation.

These tokens were sufficient to aggravate the malady of Argenti, whose illusions became instantly more frequent and desperate, and his affliction almost a frenzy; so that going at night to his children, he looked upon them in an agony of despair, as though they were already in their shrouds. And when he gazed on their delicate round cheeks, like ripening fruits, and their fair arms, like sculptured marbles, entwining each other, 'tis no marvel that he begrudged to pestilence the horrible and loathsome disfigurements and changes which it would bring upon their beautiful bodies; neither that he contemplated with horror the painful stages by which they must travel to their premature graves. Some meditations as dismal I doubt not occupied his incoherent thoughts, and whilst they lay before him so lovely and calm-looking, made him wish that instead of a temporal sleep,

they were laid in eternal rest. Their odorous breath, as he kissed them, was as sweet as flowers; and their pure skin without spot or blemish: nevertheless, to his gloomy fancy the corrupted touches of Death were on them both, and devoted their short-lived frames to his most hateful inflictions.

Imagine him gazing full of these dismal thoughts on their faces, sometimes smiting himself upon his forehead, that entertained such horrible fancies, and sometimes pacing to and fro in the chamber with an emphatic step, which must needs have wakened his little ones if they had not been lapped in the profound slumber of innocence and childhood. In the meantime the mild light of love in his looks, changes into a fierce and dreary fire; his sparkling eyes, and his lips as pallid as ashes, betraying the desperate access of frenzy, which like a howling demon passes into his feverish soul, and provokes him to unnatural action: and first of all

he plucks away the pillows, those downy ministers to harmless sleep, but now unto death, with which crushing the tender faces of his little ones, he thus dams up their gentle respirations before they can utter a cry; then casting himself with horrid fervour upon their bodies, with this unfatherlike embrace he enfolds them till they are quite breathless. After which he lifts up the pillows, and, lo! there lie the two murdered babes, utterly quiet and still,—and with the ghastly seal of death imprinted on their waxen cheeks.

In this dreadful manner Argenti destroyed his innocent children,—not in hatred, but ignorantly, and wrought upon by the constant apprehension of their death; even as a terrified wretch upon a precipice, who swerves towards the very side that presents the danger. Let his deed, therefore, be viewed with compassion, as the fault of his unhappy fate, which forced upon him such a cruel crisis, and finally ended

his sorrows by as tragical a death. On the morrow his dead body was found at sea, by some fishermen, and being recognized as Argenti's, it was interred in one grave with those of his two children.

THE THREE JEWELS.

How many shapes hath Love?
Marry, as many as your molten lead.

THE THREE JEWELS.

THERE are many examples in ancient and modern story, of lovers who have worn various disguises to obtain their mistresses; the great Jupiter himself setting the pattern by his notable transformations. Since those heroic days, Love has often diverted himself in Italy as a shepherd with his pastoral crook; and I propose to tell you how, in more recent times, he has gone amongst us in various other shapes. But in the first place I must introduce to you a handsome youth, named Torrello, of Bergamo, who was enamoured of Fiorenza, the daughter of gentlefolks in the same neighbourhood. His enemies never objected any thing against Tor-

rello, but his want of means to support his gentlemanly pretensions and some extravagances and follies, which belong generally to youth, and are often the mere foils of a generous nature. However, the parents of Fiorenza being somewhat austere, perceived graver offences in his flights, and forbade him, under grievous penalties, to keep company with his mistress.

Love, notwithstanding, is the parent of more inventions than Necessity, and Torrello, being a lively-witted fellow, and withal deeply inspired by love, soon found out a way to be as often as he would in the presence of his lady. Seeing that he could not transform himself, like Jupiter, into a shower of gold for her sake, he put on the more humble seeming of a gardener, and so got employed in the pleasure-ground of her parents. I leave you to guess, then, how the flowers prospered under his care, since they were to form bouquets for Fiorenza, who was seldom afterwards to be seen without some pretty blossom in her bosom. She took many

lessons besides of the gardener, in his gentle craft, and her fondness growing for the employment, her time was almost all spent naturally amongst her plants, and to the infinite cultivation of her heart's-ease, which had never before prospered to such a growth. She learned also of Torrello a pretty language of hieroglyphics, which he had gathered from the girls of the Greek Islands, so that they could hold secret colloquies together by exchanges of flowers; and Fiorenza became more eloquent by this kind of speech than in her own language, which she had never found competent to her dearest confessions.

Conceive how abundantly happy they were in such employments, surrounded by the lovely gifts of Nature, their pleasant occupation of itself being the primeval recreation of humankind before the fall, and love especially being with them, that can convert a wilderness into a garden of sweets.

The mother of Fiorenza, chiding her some-

times for the neglect of her embroideries, she would answer in this manner:—

"Oh, my dear mother! what is there in labours of art at all comparable with these? Why should I task myself with a tedious needle to stitch out poor tame formal emblems of these beautiful flowers and plants, when thus the living blooms spring up naturally under my hands. I confess I never could account for the fondness of young women for that unwholesome chamber-work, for the sake of a piece of inanimate tapestry, which hath neither freshness nor fragrance; whereas, this breezy air, with the odour of the plants and shrubs, inspirits my very heart. I assure you, 'tis like a work of magic to see how they are charmed to spring up by the hands of our skilful gardener, who is so civil and kind as to teach me all the secrets of his art."

By such expressions her mother was quieted; but her father was not so easily pacified; for it happened, that whilst the roses flourished every-

where, the household herbs, by the neglect of Torrello and his assistants, went entirely to decay, so that at last, though there was a nosegay in every chamber, there was seldom a sallad for the table. The master taking notice of the neglect, and the foolish Torrello in reply showing a beautiful flowery arbour, which he had busied himself in erecting, he was abruptly discharged on the spot, and driven out, like Adam, from his Paradise of flowers.

The mother being informed afterwards of this transaction—

"In truth," said she, "it was well done of you, for the fellow was very forward, and I think Fiorenza did herself some disparagement in making so much of him, as I have observed. For example, a small fee of a crown or two would have paid him handsomely for his lessons to her, without giving him one of her jewels, which I fear the knave will be insolent enough to wear and make a boast of."

And truly Torrello never parted with the gift,

which, as though it had been some magical talisman, transformed him quickly into a master falconer, on the estate of the parent of Fiorenza; and thus he rode side by side with her whenever she went a-fowling. That healthful exercise soon restored her cheerfulness, which, towards autumn, on the withering of her flowers, had been touched with melancholy; and she pursued her new pastime with as much eagerness as before. She rode always beside the falconer, as constant as a tassel-gentle to his lure; whilst Torrello often forgot to recal his birds from their flights. His giddiness and inadvertence at last procuring his dismissal, the falcon was taken from his finger, which Fiorenza recompensed with a fresh jewel, to console him for his disgrace.

After this event, there being neither gardening nor fowling to amuse her, the languid girl fell into a worse melancholy than before, that quite disconcerted her parents. After a consultation, therefore, between themselves, they

sent for a noted physician from Turin, in spite of the opposition of Fiorenza, who understood her own ailment sufficiently to know that it was desperate to his remedies. In the mean time his visits raised the anxiety of Torrello to such a pitch, that after languishing some days about the mansion, he contrived to waylay the doctor on his return, and learned from him the mysterious nature of the patient's disease. The doctor confessing his despair of her cure,

"Be of good cheer," replied Torrello; "I know well her complaint, and without any miracle will enable you to restore her, so as to redound very greatly to your credit. You tell me that she will neither eat nor drink, and cannot sleep if she would, but pines miserably away, with a despondency which must end in either madness or her dissolution: whereas, I promise you she shall not only feed heartily, and sleep soundly, but dance and sing as merrily as you can desire."

He then related confidentially, the history of

their mutual love, and begged earnestly, that the physician would devise some means of getting him admitted to the presence of his mistress. The doctor being a good-hearted man, was much moved by the entreaties of Torrello, and consented to use his ability.

"However," said he, "I can think of no way but one, which would displease you—and that is, that you should personate my pupil, and attend upon her with my medicines."

The joyful Torrello assured the doctor, "that he was very much mistaken in supposing that any falsely-imagined pride could overmaster the vehemence of his love;" and accordingly putting on an apron, with the requisite habits, he repaired on his errand to the languishing Fiorenza. She recovered very speedily, at his presence—but was altogether well again, to learn that thus a new mode was provided for their interviews. The physician thereupon was gratified with a handsome present by her parents, who allowed the assistant likewise to

continue his visits till he had earned another jewel of Fiorenza. Prudence at last telling them that they must abandon this stratagem, they prepared for a fresh separation, but taking leave of each other upon a time too tenderly, they were observed by the father, and whilst Torrello was indignantly thrust out at the door, Fiorenza was commanded, with a stern rebuke, to her own chamber.

The old lady thereupon asking her angry husband concerning the cause of the uproar, he told her that he had caught the doctor's man on his knees to Fiorenza.

"A plague take him!" said he; "'tis the trick of all his tribe, with a pretence of feeling women's pulses to steal away their hands. I marvel how meanly the jade will bestow her favour next; but it will be a baser varlet, I doubt, than a gardener, or a falconer."

"The falconer!" said the mother, "you spoke just now of the doctor's man."

"Ay," quoth he, "but I saw her exchange

looks, too, with the falconer; my heart misgives me, that we shall undergo much disgrace and trouble on account of such a self-willed and froward child."

"Alas!" quoth the mother, "it is the way of young women, when they are crossed in the man of their liking; they grow desperate and careless of their behaviour. It is a pity, methinks, we did not let her have Torrello, who, with all his faults, was a youth of gentle birth, and not likely to disgrace us by his manners; but it would bring me down to my grave, to have the girl debase herself with any of these common and low-bred people."

Her husband, agreeing in these sentiments, they concerted how to have Torrello recalled, which the lady undertook to manage, so as to make the most of their parental indulgence to Fiorenza. Accordingly, after a proper lecture on her indiscretions, she dictated a dutiful letter to her lover, who came very joyfully in his own character as a gentleman, and a time

was appointed for the wedding. When the day arrived, and the company were all assembled, the mother, who was very lynx-sighted, espied the three trinkets, namely, a ring, a clasp, and a buckle, on the person of Torrello, that had belonged to her daughter: however, before she could put any questions, he took Fiorenza by the hand, and spoke as follows.

"I know what a history you are going to tell me of the indiscretions of Fiorenza; and that the several jewels you regard so suspiciously, were bestowed by her on a gardener, a falconer, and a doctor's man. Those three knaves, being all as careless and improvident as myself, the gifts are come, as you perceive, into my own possession; notwithstanding, lest any should impeach, therefore, the constancy of this excellent lady, let them know that I will maintain her honour in behalf of myself, as well as of those other three, in token of which I have put on their several jewels."

The parents being enlightened by this dis-

course, and explaining it to their friends, the young people were married, to the general satisfaction; and Fiorenza confessed herself thrice happy with the gardener, the falconer, and the doctor's man.

GERONIMO AND GHISOLA.

"This small, small thing, you say is venomous,
Its bite deadly, tho' but a very pin's prick.
Now, ought Death to be called a Fairy—
For he might creep in, look you, through a keyhole."

OLD PLAY.

GERONIMO AND GHISOLA.

THERE are many tragical instances on record, of cruel parents who have tried to control the affections of their children; but as well might they endeavour to force backwards the pure mountain current into base and unnatural channels. Such attempts, whether of sordid parents or ungenerous rivals, redound only to the disgrace of the contrivers; for Love is a jealous deity, and commonly avenges himself by some memorable catastrophe.

Thus it befel to the ambitious Marquis of Ciampolo, when he aimed at matching his only daughter, Ghisola, with the unfortunate Alfieri; whereas her young heart was already devoted

to her faithful Geronimo, a person of gentle birth and much merit, though of slender estate. For this reason, his virtues were slighted by all but Ghisola, who had much cause to grieve at her father's blindness; for Alfieri was a proud and jealous man, and did not scorn to disparage his rival by the most unworthy reports. He had, indeed, so little generosity, that although she pleaded the prepossession of her heart by another, he did not cease to pursue her; and finally, the Marquis, discovering the reason of her rejection, the unhappy Geronimo was imperatively banished from her presence.

In this extremity, the disconsolate lovers made friends with a venerable oak, in the Marquis's park, which presented a convenient cavity for the reception of their scrolls; and in this way, this aged tree became the mute and faithful confidant of their secret correspondence. Its mossy and knotted trunk was inhabited by several squirrels, and its branches by various birds; and in its gnarled roots, a family of red ants had

made their fortress, which afforded a sufficient excuse for Ghisola to stop often before the tree, as if to observe their curious and instructive labours. In this manner they exchanged their fondest professions, and conveyed the dearest aspirations of their hearts to each other.

But love is a purblind and imprudent passion, which, like the ostrich, conceals itself from its proper sense, and then foolishly imagines that it is shrouded from all other eyes. Thus, whenever Ghisola walked abroad, her steps wandered by attraction to the self-same spot, her very existence seeming linked, like the life of a dryad, to her favourite tree. At last, these repeated visits attracting the curiosity of the vigilant Alfieri, his ingenuity soon divined the cause; and warily taking care to examine all the scrolls that passed between them, it happened that several schemes, which they plotted for a secret interview, were vexatiously disconcerted. The unsuspicious lovers, however, attributed these spiteful disappointments to the

malice of chance; and thus their correspondence continued till towards the end of autumn, when the oak tree began to shed its last withered leaves; but Ghisola heeded not, so long as it afforded those other ones, which were more golden in her eyes than any upon the boughs.

One evil day, however, repairing as usual to the cavity, it was empty and treasureless, although her own deposit had been removed as heretofore; and the dews beneath, it appeared, had been lately brushed away by the foot of her dear Geronimo. She knew, notwithstanding, that at any risk he would not so have grieved her; wherefore, returning homewards with a heavy heart, she dreaded, not unreasonably, that she should discover what she pined for in the hands of her incensed father; but being deceived in this expectation, she spent the rest of the day in tears and despondence; for, rather than believe any negligence of Geronimo, she resolved that he must have met with some tragical adventure; wherefore his bleed-

ing ghost, with many more such horrible phantasies, did not fail to visit her in her thoughts and dreams.

In the meantime, Geronimo was in equal despair at not having received any writings from Ghisola; but his doubts took another turn than hers, and justly alighted on the treacherous Alfieri. At the first hints of his suspicion, therefore, he ran to the house of his rival, where the domestics refused positively to admit him, declaring that their master, if not already deceased, was upon the very threshold of death. Geronimo naturally supposing this story to be a mere subterfuge, drew his sword, and with much ado forced his way up to the sick man's chamber, where he found him stretched out upon a couch, and covered from head to heel with a long cloak. The noise of the door disturbing him, Alfieri uncovered his face, and looked out with a countenance so horribly puckered by anguish and distorted, that Geronimo for an instant forgot his purpose,

but recovering himself from the shock, he asked fiercely for the letters.

The dying wretch answered to this demand with a deep groan, and removing the cloak, he showed Geronimo his bare arm, which was swelled as large round nearly as a man's body, and quite black and livid to the shoulder; but the hand was redder in colour, and merely a lump of unshapely flesh, though without any perceptible wound.

"This," said he, pointing to the livid member, "is my punishment for a deep offence to you; and there is your cruel avenger."

Geronimo, turning by his direction towards the table, at first sight discovered nothing deadly, but on looking within a little silver box, he discovered a small dead scorpion, the bite of which, in our climate, is frequently mortal. Alfieri then motioning to Geronimo to come nearer, continued with great difficulty in these words:—

"There is a certain old oak, with a cleft in

it, in the Marquis's park, which is but too well known to us both. My evil fortune led me to discover its use to you; and my baseness to abuse that knowledge, for which I am suffering these torments. For putting my guilty hand into the hollow for your papers, which I blush to confess were my object, I was stung on my finger by this accursed reptile, who was lurking in the bottom of the hole. I have killed it as you see, though my own anguish commenced with its destruction. Notwithstanding, I took away the papers and ran hither, where, on looking at my hand, it was as scarlet as my shame; and my arm was already beginning to swell to this monstrous size, and the convulsed muscles were all writhing together like as many serpents. And now my pangs, together with the fever of my remorseless mind, have brought me to the extremity you behold." Saying which, he fell into a fresh fit of agony, so that the sweat issued in large drops from his forehead, and his eyes turned in their sockets with

nothing but the whites upon Geronimo, whose flesh crept all over with compassion and dread.

This paroxysm passing over, he wiped away the foam from his mouth, and began to speak again, but in a much weaker voice and by syllables.

"You see," said he, "my injuries have returned, like ardent coals, upon my own head. I designed to have supplanted you, whereas I am myself removed from my place on the earth. Let me then depart with your forgiveness for the peace of my soul; whilst, on my part, I make you amends as far as I may. And first of all, take this box with its fatal contents to the Marquis, and bid him know by this token that God was adverse to our will. And because I did love, though vainly, let all my possession be laid at the same feet where I used to kneel; and beseech her, for charity's sake, to bestow her prayers on my departed soul. Tell her my pangs were bitter, and my fate cruel, except in preserving her from as horrible a cala-

mity." He then fell backwards again upon the couch, and died.

As soon as he was laid out, Geronimo went and delivered the message to the Marquis, whom he found chiding with Ghisola for her melancholy. As he was much impressed with the dreadful scene he had witnessed, he described it very eloquently, so that both of his hearers were much affected, and especially at sight of the box with the dead scorpion. It cost Ghisola some fresh tears, which her lover did not reprove, to be told of the expressions which related to herself; but the Marquis was still more shocked at the relation, and confessing that it was the judgment of heaven, he no longer opposed himself to the union of Ghisola with Geronimo. He then caused the remains of Alfieri to be honourably buried; and it was observed that Geronimo shed the most tears of any one that wept over his tomb.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

"What is here?
Gold, yellow glittering precious gold!"
TIMON OF ATHENS.

The Fall of the Leaf.

Vol 1

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T. Dighton

Printed by J. Hullmandel.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

THERE is no vice that causes more calamities in human life, than the intemperate passion for gaming. How many noble and ingenious persons it hath reduced from wealth unto poverty; nay, from honesty to dishonour, and by still descending steps into the gulf of perdition. And yet how prevalent it is in all capital cities, where many of the chiefest merchants, and courtiers especially, are mere pitiful slaves of fortune, toiling like so many abject turnspits in her ignoble wheel. Such a man is worse off than a poor borrower, for all he has is at the momentary call of

imperative chance ; or rather he is more wretched than a very beggar, being mocked with an appearance of wealth, but as deceitful as if it turned, like the monies in the old Arabian story, into decaying leaves.

In our parent city of Rome, to aggravate her modern disgraces, this pestilent vice has lately fixed her abode, and has inflicted many deep wounds on the fame and fortunes of her proudest families. A number of noble youths have been sucked into the ruinous vortex, some of them being degraded at last into humble retainers upon rich men, but the most part perishing by an unnatural catastrophe ; and if the same fate did not befal the young Marquis de Malaspini, it was only by favour of a circumstance which is not likely to happen a second time for any gamester.

This gentleman came into a handsome revenue at the death of his parents, whereupon, to dissipate his regrets, he travelled abroad, and his graceful manners procured him a distinguished

reception at several courts. After two years spent in this manner he returned to Rome, where he had a magnificent palace on the banks of the Tiber, and which he further enriched with some valuable paintings and sculptures from abroad. His taste in these works was much admired; and his friends remarked with still greater satisfaction, that he was untainted by the courtly vices which he must have witnessed in his travels. It only remained to complete their wishes, that he should form a matrimonial alliance that should be worthy of himself, and he seemed likely to fulfil this hope in attaching himself to the beautiful Countess of Maraviglia. She was herself the heiress of an ancient and honourable house; so that the match was regarded with satisfaction by the relations on both sides, and especially as the young pair were most tenderly in love with each other.

For certain reasons, however, the nuptials were deferred for a time, thus affording leisure for the crafty machinations of the Devil, who

delights, above all things, to cross a virtuous and happy marriage. Accordingly, he did not fail to make use of this judicious opportunity, but chose for his instrument the lady's own brother, a very profligate and a gamester, who soon fastened, like an evil genius, on the unlucky Malaspini.

It was a dismal shock to the lady, when she learned the nature of this connexion, which Malaspini himself discovered to her, by incautiously dropping a die from his pocket in her presence. She immediately endeavoured, with all her influence, to reclaim him from the dreadful passion for play, which had now crept over him like a moral cancer, and already disputed the sovereignity of love; neither was it without some dreadful struggles of remorse on his own part, and some useless victories, that he at last gave himself up to such desperate habits, but the power of his Mephistophiles prevailed, and the visits of Malaspini to the lady of his affections became still less frequent; he repairing instead

to those nightly resorts where the greater portion of his estates was already forfeited.

At length, when the lady had not seen him for some days, and in the very last week before that which had been appointed for her marriage, she received a desperate letter from Malaspini, declaring that he was a ruined man, in fortune and hope; and that at the cost of his life even, he must renounce her hand for ever. He added, that if his pride would let him even propose himself, a beggar as he was, for her acceptance, he should yet despair too much of her pardon to make such an offer; whereas, if he could have read in the heart of the unhappy lady, he would have seen that she still preferred the beggar Malaspini, to the richest nobleman in the Popedom. With abundance of tears and sighs perusing his letter, her first impulse was to assure him of that loving truth; and to offer herself with her estates to him, in compensation of the spites

of Fortune: but the wretched Malaspini had withdrawn himself no one knew whither, and she was constrained to content herself with grieving over his misfortunes, and purchasing such parts of his property as were exposed for sale by his plunderers. And now it became apparent what a villanous part his betrayer had taken; for, having thus stripped the unfortunate gentleman, he now aimed to rob him of his life also, that his treacheries might remain undiscovered. To this end he feigned a most vehement indignation at Malaspini's neglect and bad faith, as he termed it, towards his sister; protesting that it was an insult to be only washed out with his blood: and with these expressions, he sought to kill him at any advantage. And no doubt he would have become a murderer, as well as a dishonest gamester, if Malaspini's shame and anguish had not drawn him out of the way; for he had hired a mean lodging in the suburbs, from which he never

issued but at dusk, and then only to wander in the most unfrequented places.

It was now in the wane of Autumn, when some of the days are fine, and gorgeously decorated at morn and eve by the rich sun's embroideries; but others are dewy and dull, with cold nipping winds, inspiring comfortless fancies and thoughts of melancholy in every bosom. In such a dreary hour, Malaspini happened to walk abroad, and avoiding his own squandered estates, which it was not easy to do by reason of their extent, he wandered into a bye place in the neighbourhood. The place was very lonely and desolate, and without any near habitation; its main feature especially being a large tree, now stripped bare of its vernal honours, excepting one dry yellow leaf, which was shaking on a topmost bough to the cold evening wind, and threatening at every moment to fall to the damp, dewy earth. Before this dreary object Malaspini stopped some time in contemplation,

commenting to himself on the desolate tree, and drawing many apt comparisons between its nakedness and his own beggarly condition.

"Alas! poor bankrupt," says he, "thou hast been plucked too, like me; but yet not so basely. Thou hast but showered thy green leaves on the grateful earth, which in another season will repay thee with sap and sustenance; but those whom I have fattened will not so much as lend again to my living. Thou wilt thus regain all thy green summer wealth, which I shall never do; and besides, thou art still better off than I am, with that one golden leaf to cheer thee, whereas I have been stripped even of my last ducat!"

With these and many more similar fancies he continued to aggrieve himself, till at last, being more sad than usual, his thoughts tended unto death, and he resolved, still watching that yellow leaf, to take its flight as the signal for his own departure.

"Chance," said he, "hath been my temporal ruin, and so let it now determine for me, in my last cast between life and death, which is all that its malice hath left me."

Thus, in his extremity he still risked somewhat upon fortune; and very shortly the leaf being torn away by a sudden blast, it made two or three flutterings to and fro, and at last settled on the earth, at about a hundred paces from the tree. Malaspini instantly interpreted this as an omen that he ought to die; and following the leaf till it alighted, he fell to work on the same spot with his sword, intending to scoop himself a sort of rude hollow for a grave. He found a strange gloomy pleasure in this fanciful design, that made him labour very earnestly; and the soil besides being loose and sandy, he had soon cleared away about a foot below the surface. The earth then became suddenly more obstinate, and trying it here and there with his sword, it

struck against some very hard substance; whereupon, digging a little further down, he discovered a considerable treasure.

There were coins of various nations, but all golden, in this petty mine; and in such quantity as made Malaspini doubt, for a moment, if it were not the mere mintage of his fancy. Assuring himself, however, that it was no dream, he gave many thanks to God for this timely providence; notwithstanding, he hesitated for a moment, to deliberate whether it was honest to avail himself of the money; but believing, as was most probable, that it was the plunder of some banditti, he was reconciled to the appropriation of it to his own necessities.

Loading himself, therefore, with as much gold as he could conveniently carry, he hastened with it to his humble quarters; and by making two or three more trips in the course of the night, he made himself master of the whole treasure. It was sufficient, on being reckoned,

to maintain him in comfort for the rest of his life; but not being able to enjoy it in the scene of his humiliations, he resolved to reside abroad; and embarking in an English vessel at Naples, he was carried over safely to London.

It is held a deep disgrace amongst our Italian nobility for a gentleman to meddle with either trade or commerce; and yet, as we behold, they will condescend to retail their own produce, and wine especially,—yea, marry, and with an empty barrel, like any vintner's sign, hung out at their stately palaces. Malaspini perhaps disdained from the first these illiberal prejudices; or else he was taught to renounce them by the example of the London merchants, whom he saw in that great mart of the world, engrossing the universal seas, and enjoying the power and importance of princes, merely from the fruits of their traffic. At any rate, he embarked what money he possessed in various mercantile adventures, which ended

so profitably, that in three years he had regained almost as large a fortune as he had formerly inherited. He then speedily returned to his native country, and redeeming his paternal estates, he was soon in a worthy condition to present himself to his beloved Countess, who was still single, and cherished him with all a woman's devotedness in her constant affection. They were therefore before long united, to the contentment of all Rome; her wicked relation having been slain some time before, in a brawl with his associates.

As for the fortunate wind-fall which had so befriended him, Malaspini founded with it a noble hospital for orphans; and for this reason, that it belonged formerly to some fatherless children, from whom it had been withheld by their unnatural guardian. This wicked man it was who had buried the money in the sand: but when he found that his treasure was stolen, he went and hanged himself on the very tree that had caused its discovery.

BARANGA.

Miserable creature !
If thou persist in this, 'tis damnable.
Do'st thou imagine thou canst slide in blood,
And not be tainted with a shameful fall ?
Or, like the black and melancholic yew-tree,
Do'st think to root thyself in dead men's graves
And yet to prosper ?

THE WHITE DEVIL.

BARANGA.

It has been well said, that if there be no marriages made up in Heaven, there are a great many contrived in a worse place; the Devil having a visible hand in some matches, which turn out as mischievous and miserable as he could desire. Not that I mean here to rail against wedlock, the generality of such mockers falling into its worst scrapes; but my mind is just now set upon such contracts as that of the Marquis Manfredi with Baranga, who before the year was out began to devise his death.

This woman, it has been supposed by those who remember her features, was a Jewess,—which, in a Catholic country, the Marquis

would be unwilling to acknowledge,—however, he affirmed that he had brought her from the kingdom of Spain. She was of the smallest figure that was ever known, and very beautiful, but of as impatient and fiery a temper as the cat-a-mountains of her own country; never hesitating, in her anger, at any extremes,—neither sparing her own beautiful hair nor her richest dresses, which she sometimes tore into shreds with her passionate hands. At such times she confirmed but too plausibly her imputed sisterhood with Jael and Deborah, and those traditional Hebrew women who faltered not even at acts of blood; and who could not have looked more wildly at their tragedies than she, when she stood in her splendid rags, with her eyes flashing as darkly and as dangerously as theirs.

As soon as she arrived in Italy, her fatal beauty captivated a number of unhappy youths, who were led by her waywardness into the most painful adventures; some of them suffering by encounters amongst themselves, and

others by the conversion of her fickle favour into hatred and scorn. Manfredi suspected little of these mischiefs, till at last the season of the Carnival drew nigh, when fearing the influence of that long revel of pleasure and dissipation upon her mind, he withdrew with her to his country seat, which was about nine leagues distant from Rome. Thither she was followed by one of her gallants, named Vitelli, a ferocious and dissolute man, and whom it is believed she engaged to pursue her, not so much from personal liking, as in the hope of his assistance to relieve her from this irksome retirement. Her temper, in the meantime, being irritated by such restraint, grew every day more fierce and desperate—her cries often resounding through the house, which was strewed with fresh tokens of her fury. With whatever grief the Marquis beheld these paroxysms, he comforted himself by a fond reliance on her affection, and endeavoured by the most tender assiduities to console her for the disap-

pointment he had inflicted. The moment of her arrival in the country, therefore, he presented her, as a peace-offering, with a pair of superb ear-rings; but he quickly beheld her with her ears dropping blood, and the jewels, which she had violently plucked away, lying trampled on the floor.

It was common for such scenes to happen whenever they encountered; and in consequence their meetings, by mutual care, were more and more avoided, till they almost lived asunder in the same house. In the mean time, Baranga did not forget her desire to be present at the Carnival, but contrived several stolen interviews with Vitelli; after which her manner changed abruptly from its usual violence to a gentler and thoughtful demeanour, her hours being chiefly spent solitarily in her own chamber. Above all, she never mentioned the Carnival, which had been till then her constant subject, but seemed rather to resign herself quietly to the wishes of her husband, who,

seeing her so docile, repented in his heart of having ever crossed her pleasure.

It was in those infamous times, that the hell-born fashion of empoisonment spread itself throughout Italy like a contagious pestilence, and to the everlasting scandal of our history was patronized and protected by the rich and great. Thus there were various professors of the infernal art, who taught, by their damnable compounds, how to ravish away life either suddenly or by languishing stages; and many persons of note and quality became their disciples, to the endless perdition of their souls, or at best, to the utter hardening of their hearts, according as they were prompted in their experiments by unlawful curiosity, or by more black and malignant motives. Whilst some practised, therefore, on the bodies of dogs and cats, and such mean animals, there were not wanting others who used their diabolical skill upon human relations that were obnoxious, and the names of many such victims are recorded,

though the fate of a still greater number was hinted only by popular suspicion.

To one of these vile agents then, the base Vitelli addressed himself; and the secret studies of Baranga were guided by his direction. Whilst the Marquis was hoping in the wholesome results of a temporary melancholy and seclusion, which have made some minds so nobly philosophize, her guilty lovely hands were tampering with horrid chemistry; and her meditations busy with the most black and deadly syrups. There is a traditional picture of her thus occupied in her chamber, with the apparition of Death at her elbow, whilst with her black and piercing eyes she is watching the martyrdom of a little bird, that is perishing from her Circean compounds.

And now we may suppose Manfredi to be doomed as the next victim of her pernicious craft—who, on his part, was too unsuspicious to reject any thing which she might tender to him with her infinitely small and delicate white

hand. And assuredly the appointment of his death was not far distant, when the jealousy of the disappointed suitors of Baranga prevented her design. They had not omitted to place some spies over her movements: wherefore, on the eve of the Carnival, Manfredi was advised by a letter in an unknown hand, that she had concerted with Vitelli her elopement to Rome, and in a nun's habit, as he might convince himself with little pains, by an inspection of her wardrobe.

Manfredi was not a person to shut his eyes wilfully against the light,—but recalled with some uneasiness her mysterious seclusion. He chose a time, therefore, when Baranga was absent, to visit her wardrobe, where, if he did not discover the nun's habit, he found a complete suit of new sables, which had been prepared by her in anticipation of her widowhood. It is easy to conceive with what horror he shrunk aghast at this dreary evidence of her malignity, which yet was not fully confirmed,

till he had broken into her unholy study, and lo! there lay the dead bird, beside some samples of her diabolical chemistry, upon a table. There were lying about baneful hellebore, and nightshade, and laurel, and such poisonous herbs, and I know not what deadly resins and gums, whether in syrups or as drugs, together with divers venomous styles and imbued needles for the infliction of death; yea, even subtle and impalpable powders to be inhaled by the sleeping with the vital air, to such a villanous pitch those curst empoisoners had carried their speculative inventions.

Manfredi knew too well the import of these dreadful symptoms, to doubt any longer of her purpose; however, he touched nothing, but with a dreadful stern composure returned down stairs, and sending for a trusty domestic, commanded him to go instantly for a shroud. The man, obeying this strange order without any comment, in an hour returned with the deathly garment, which the Marquis with his own hands

then hung up in the wardrobe, beside the widow's weeds, and in that plight left it for the discovery of Baranga.

And truly this was but a timely proceeding, for in that very hour she concerted with Vitelli to poison her husband at supper with a dish of sweetmeats; after which she returned home, and was first startled by the stern silence of Manfredi, who turned from her without a syllable. Her wretched guilty heart immediately smote her, and running up to her devilish sanctuary, she saw that it had been invaded; but how much more was she shocked upon sight of the dreary and awful shroud hanging beside those premature weeds, which it warned her she was never to put on! In a frenzy of despair, therefore, turning her own cruel arms against herself, she swallowed one of the most deadly of her preparations, and casting herself down on the floor, with a horrible ghastly countenance awaited the same dreadful pangs which she had so lately witnessed on the poisoned bird. And

now, doubtless, it came bitterly over her, what fearful flutterings she had seen it make, and throbs, and miserable gaspings of its dying beak; and even as the bird had perished, so did she.

There was no one bold enough to look upon her last agonies; but when she was silent and still, the Marquis came in and wept over her ill-starr'd body—which had been brought by its ungovernable spirit to so frightful a dissolution.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET-STREET.

The German Knight.

Vol 1. To face Title

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T. Dighton.

Printed by C. Hullmandel.

NATIONAL TALES.

BY

THOMAS HOOD,

AUTHOR OF "WHIMS AND ODDITIES."

I am to speak of universal occurrences, with some misfortunes in part, and partly leaning to matters of love. *Philostratus.*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON:

WILLIAM H. AINSWORTH, OLD BOND STREET.

MDCCCXXVII.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

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THE EXILE,

" I'faith there 's a warp in his brain !
A straight thought grows as crooked in his reflection,
As the shadow of a stick in a pond."

LOVE'S MADNESS.

THE EXILE,

" I'faith there 's a warp in his brain !
A straight thought grows as crooked in his reflection,
As the shadow of a stick in a pond."

LOVE'S MADNESS.

The Exile.

Vol. 2.

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T. Dighton.

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THE EXILE.

In the reign of King Charles the Fifth of Spain, there lived in Madrid a gentleman, who being of a fair reputation and an ample fortune, obtained in marriage the daughter of one of the counsellors of state. He had not lived long thus happily, when one day his father-in-law returned from the council, with a countenance full of dismay, and informed him that a secret accusation of treason had been preferred against him.

"Now, I know," said he, "that you are incapable of so great a wickedness, not merely

from the loyalty of your nature, but because you cannot be so cruel as to have joined in a plot which was directed against my own life as well as others: yet, not knowing how far the malice of your enemies might prevail, for your marriage has made foes of many who were before your rivals, I would advise you to a temporary flight. Time, which discovers all mysteries, will then, in some happier season, unravel the plot which is laid against your life: but at present, the prejudice against you is hot—and the danger therefore is imminent."

To this the gentleman replied, that as he should answer to God in judgment, he was innocent, and altogether ignorant of the treason imputed to him; and therefore, being conscious of his innocence, and besides, so recently married, he preferred rather to remain in the kingdom and await the issue of his trial. The danger, however, became more pressing with every hour, and, finally, the advice of the counsellor prevailed. The unfortunate gentle-

man, accordingly, took a hasty but most affectionate farewell of his young wife; and with a heavy heart embarked on board a foreign merchant vessel that was bound for the Gulf of Venice. The counsellor was immediately arrested and thrown into prison, as having been an accessary to his son-in-law's escape; but being afterwards set free, he was still watched so vigilantly by the spies of the accusers, that he could not safely engage in any correspondence with his relation.

In this manner nearly two years passed away; till at length the miserable exile grew so impatient of his condition, that he resolved to return, even at whatever hazard to his life. Passing therefore by way of France into Spain, and taking care to disguise himself so effectually that he could not be recognized by his oldest acquaintance, he arrived in safety at a village in the neighbourhood of Madrid. There he learned, for the first time, that his father-in-law had been disgraced and amerced so heavily,

that being of a proud spirit and unable to endure his reverses, he had died of a broken heart: and moreover, that his daughter was presently living in the capital in the greatest affliction. At these melancholy tidings, he repented more than ever that he had quitted Spain, and resolved to repair to his wife without any further delay.

Now it chanced in the village where he was resting, that he had a very dear friend, named Rodrigo, who had been his school-mate, and was as dear to him as a brother; and going to his house at sunset, he discovered himself to the other, and besought him to go before to Madrid, and prepare his dear wife for his arrival. "And now, remember," said he, "that my life, and not only mine, but my dear lady's also, depends upon your breath; and if you frame it into any speech, so imprudently as to betray me, I vow by our Holy Lady of Loretto, that I will eat your heart;" and with this and still stranger expressions, he conducted

himself so wildly, as to show that his misfortunes, and perhaps some sickness, had impaired the healthiness of his brain. His friend, however, like a prudent man, concealed this observation; but unlocking his library, and saying that there was store of entertainment in his absence, he departed on his mission.

On Rodrigo's arrival at the lady's house, she was seated on a sofa, and, as if to divert her cares, was busied in some embroidery; but every now and then she stayed her needle to wipe off a tear that gathered on her long dark eye-lashes, and sometimes to gaze for minutes together on a small portrait which lay before her on a table. "Alas!" she said to the picture, "we two that should have lived together so happily, to be thus asunder; but absence has made room for sorrow to come between us, and it slays both our hearts:" and as she complained thus, Rodrigo joyfully entered and began to unfold to her his welcome tidings.

At first, the sorrowful lady paid scarcely any

attention to his words, but so soon as she comprehended that it concerned her dear husband's arrival, she could hardly breathe for joy.

"What! shall I behold him here, in this very spot; nay here," said she, pressing her hands vehemently upon her bosom: "I pray thee do not mock me, for my life is so flown into this hope, that they must die together if you deceive me;" and only at the entrance of that doubt she burst into a flood of tears. But being assured that the news was indeed true, and that her husband would presently be with her, she clasped her hands passionately together, and crying out that joy was as hard to bear as grief, besought Heaven that it might not madden her before he came, and then began to weep again as violently as before. Upon this, Rodrigo reproving her, she excused herself, saying "that a dream which had troubled her in the night, had overpowered her weak spirits."

"And in truth," said she, "it was very horrible; for my dear husband appeared to me like a

phantom, and laid his cold hand upon mine, like a fall of snow; and he asked me if I was afraid of him, that I shuddered so, and I answered him 'God forbid! but yet your voice methinks is not your own, nor so gentle,—but very fierce, and there is a strange light instead of love, in your eyes.' And he said, 'This voice truly is not my own, nor the shining of my eyes; but the serpent's within me, who hath devoured my brain; and when he looks out upon thee, he will kill thee, for he does not love thee as I used, neither is there any remorse in his heart.' As he spoke thus, I saw a light shining in his skull, and wild strange eyes looking forth through his eyes; so that I cried out with terror, and awaked. But ever since this dream has haunted me, and even now, as you see, I cannot quite get rid of its depression."

At the nature of this dream Don Rodrigo could scarcely forbear from shuddering, for he doubted not that the serpent signified the madness which he had observed about his friend,

and that the vision itself was but the type of some impending calamity ; nevertheless, he subdued his own fears before the lady, and endeavoured to divert her thoughts till the arrival of her husband.

After a tedious interval, at length the door was suddenly flung open, and he leaped in ; and rushing to his wife they embraced in silence for several sweet minutes, till separating a little, that they might gaze on each other, the lady remarked that his arm was bound up in a bloody handkerchief.

"Nay," said he, perceiving her alarm ; "it is no very grievous hurt, though I have been assailed by robbers in my way hither : but, alas ! what greater injury hath grief wrought upon thee !" for with her maidenly figure, she had all the careful countenance of a matron in years.

Indeed, it was easy to conceive how their hearts had suffered and hungered for each other by their present passionate endearments, for they soon crowded into a few short minutes all

the hoarded affection of years. But such joy as theirs is often but the brief wonder of unhappy lives; and so, in the very summit of delight, they were interrupted by Don Rodrigo, who, with looks full of terror, declared that the house was beset by the police, and presently a loud knocking was heard at the outer gates. At this alarm, the two unfortunates started asunder, and listened till they heard even the throbbings of their own fearful hearts. But at the second knocking, the gentleman, quitting his wife, and drawing his sword, stared wildly about him with eyes that seemed to flash out sparkles of unnatural fire.

"Ha!" said he, casting a terrible glance upon Rodrigo; "have I sold my life to such a devil?" and suddenly springing upon him and tearing him down to the ground, he thrust his sword fiercely into his bosom.

And indeed it seemed but too reasonable that Rodrigo, who alone had known the secret of the Exile's arrival, had betrayed him to the

government. Notwithstanding, at the first flush of the blood, as it gushed out as if in reproach of the weapon, the gentleman made an effort to raise his friend again from the floor; but in the meantime the police had enforced their entrance, and now made him their prisoner without any resistance. He begged merely that his arms might be left unbound, but immediately attempting in his frenzy to do some injury to his wife, and reviling her, through madness, with the very venom and aspect of a serpent, the officers hurried him instantly to his prison. All the time that he was being fettered he seemed quite unconscious, and altogether in some dream foreign to his condition; but as the door closed and the bolts grated harshly on the outside, he recovered his senses, and made answer with a deep groan.

At first he believed he had no company in his misery, but presently he heard a rustling of straw, with a clanking of chains in one corner of the dungeon, which was a very dark one,

and a man in irons came up slowly towards the grate. The little light sufficed to show that his countenance was a very horrid one, although hidden for the most part in his black, bushy hair; and he had besides but one eye: by which tokens the gentleman readily recognized him, as one of the banditti who had set upon him in the forest.

"So, senor," said he, "I perceive that one foul night has netted us both; and therein I have done to thee one more injury than I designed; but my plunder has all gone before the council, and along with it, thy papers: so if there be aught treasonable in them that brings thee to this cage, my ill luck must be blamed for it, which is likely to bring us both to the same gallows."

At this discourse the gentleman fell into a fresh frenzy, but less of madness than of bitter grief and remorse: every word avenging upon him the stab which he had inflicted on his dear friend Rodrigo. He cast himself, therefore, on

the hard floor, and would have dashed his tortured brains against the stones, but for the struggles of the robber, who, hardhearted and savage as he had been by profession, was yet touched with strange pity at the sight of so passionate a grief. It settled upon him afterwards to a deep dejection, and in this condition, after some weeks' confinement, the wretched gentleman was finally released without any trial, by an order of the council. This change, however, which should have been a blessing to any other, produced no alleviation of his malady. It was nothing in the world to him that he was free to revisit its sunshine, and partake of all its natural delights—and above all, enjoy the consolations and the sweets of domestic affection. Though there was one ever gazing upon him with an almost breaking heart, he neither felt his own misery nor hers, but looked upon all things with an eye bright and fiery indeed at times; but not, like the stars, illuminate with knowledge.

In this mood he would sit for hours with his arms folded, and gazing upon the vacant air, sighing sometimes—but never conscious of the presence of his once beloved wife, who sat before him, and watched his stedfast countenance, till she wept at his want of sympathy. Day passed after day, and night after night, but there was no change in the darkness of his mind, till one morning, as he sat, his reason as it were returned upon him like the dawn of day, when the sky is first streaked with light, and the world gains a weak intelligence of the things that are in it. He had been looking for some minutes on his wife without knowing her, but tears glistened, for the first time, in his eyes, and at last two large drops, and with those his delirium, were shed from his eyelids. He immediately recognized his wife, and cast himself into her arms.

The joyful lady, in her turn, found it hard to retain her senses. After returning his caresses in the tenderest manner, she hastened

immediately to Don Rodrigo, who, though severely hurt, had got better of his wound, and watched the more dreadful malady of his friend, sometimes indeed, in hope, but more commonly in despair of his recovery. At the first news, therefore, he ran hastily to the room, and soon cast himself into the arms of his friend: but the latter received him coldly; and before Rodrigo could finish even a brief salutation, he felt the other's arms loosening from around his neck, and beheld his head suddenly drop, as if it had been displeasing that their eyes should meet again. It seemed, indeed, that his malady had already returned upon him; but in another moment the body fell forwards on the floor, and instantly the blood gushed from a hidden wound in the side, which had hitherto been concealed by the mantle. A pair of scissors, covered with blood and broken, for the wound had been desperately bestowed, dropped from him as he fell: for, to show more sadly the

lady's own joyful forgetfulness, she had supplied the weapon for this dreadful catastrophe.

As for the miserable lady, it was feared, from the violence of her grief, that the same dismal blow would have been her death; but her heart had been too long inured to such sufferings to be so speedily broken; and at last, attaining to that peace which belongs only to the comforts of our holy religion, she devoted her widowhood to God, and cheerfully ended an old age of piety in the Convent of St. Faith.

THE OWL.

"What great eyes you have got!"

RED RIDING HOOD.

THE OWL.

"An indiscreet friend," says the proverb, "is more dangerous than the naked sword of an enemy;" and truly, there is nothing more fatal than the act of a misjudging ally, which, like a mistake in medicine, is apt to kill the unhappy patient whom it was intended to cure.

This lesson was taught in a remarkable manner to the innocent Zerlina, a peasant; to conceive which, you must suppose her to have gone by permission into the garden of the Countess of Marezzo, near the Arno, one beautiful morning of June. It was a spacious pleasure-ground, excellently disposed and

adorned with the choicest specimens of shrubs and trees, being bounded on all sides by hedge-rows of laurels and myrtles, and such sombre ever-greens, and in the midst was a pretty verdant lawn with a sun-dial.

The numberless plants that belong to that bountiful season were then in full flower, and the delicate fragrance of the orange blossoms perfumed the universal air. The thrushes were singing merrily in the copses, and the bees, that cannot stir without music, made a joyous humming with their wings. All things were vigorous and cheerful except one, a poor owl, that had been hurt by a bolt from a cross-bow, and so had been unable by daylight to regain his accustomed hermitage, but sheltered himself under a row of laurel-trees and hollies, that afforded a delicious shadow in the noon-tide sun. There, shunning and shunned by all, as is the lot of the unfortunate, he languished over his wound; till a flight of pert sparrows espying him, he was soon forced to endure

a thousand twittings as well as buffets from that insolent race.

The noise of these chatterers attracting the attention of Zerlina, she crossed over to the spot; and, lo! there crouched the poor bewildered owl, blinking with his large bedazzled eyes, and nodding as if with giddiness from his buffetings and the blaze of unusual light.

The tender girl being very gentle and compassionate by nature, was no ways repelled by his ugliness; but thinking of his sufferings, took up the feathered wretch in her arms and endeavoured to revive him by placing him on her bosom. There, nursing him with an abundance of pity and concern, she carried him to the grass-plat, and being ignorant of his habits, laid out the poor drooping bird, as her own lively spirits prompted her, in the glowing sun-shine; for she felt in her own heart, at that moment, the kind and cheerful influence of the genial sun. Then, withdrawing a little way and leaning against the dial, she awaited the grateful

change which she hoped to behold in the creature's looks; whereas, the tormented owl being grievously dazzled, and annoyed more than ever, hopped off again, with many piteous efforts, to the shady evergreens. Notwithstanding, believing that this shyness was only because of his natural wildness or fear, she brought him over again to the lawn, and then ran into the house for some crumbs to feed him withal.

The poor owl, in the meantime, crawled partly back, as before, to his friendly shelter of holly. The simple girl found him, therefore, with much wonder, again retiring towards those gloomy bushes.

"Why, what a wilful creature is this," she thought; "that is so loth to be comforted. No sooner have I placed it in the warm cheerful sunshine, which enlivens all its fellow-birds to chirp and sing, than it goes back and mopes under the most dismal corners. I have known many human persons to have those peevish fits, and to reject kindness as perversely, but who

would look for such unnatural humours in a simple bird."

Therewith, taking the monkish fowl from his dull leafy cloisters, she disposed him once more on the sunny lawn, where he made still fresh attempts to get away from the over painful radiance—but was now become too feeble and ill to remove. Zerlina therefore began to believe that he was reconciled to his situation; but she had hardly cherished this fancy, when a dismal film came suddenly over his large round eyes; and then falling over upon his back, after one or two slow gasps of his beak, and a few twitches of his aged claws, the poor martyr of kindness expired before her sight. It cost her a few tears to witness the tragical issue of her endeavours; but she was still more grieved afterwards, when she was told of the cruelty of her unskilful treatment:—and the poor owl, with its melancholy death, was the frequent subject of her meditations.

In the year after this occurrence, it happened

that the Countess of Marezzo was in want of a young female attendant, and being much struck with the modesty and lively temper of Zerlina she requested of her parents to let her live with her. The poor people having a numerous family to provide for, agreed very cheerfully to the proposal; and Zerlina was carried by her benefactress to Rome. Her good conduct confirming the prepossessions of the Countess, the latter showed her many marks of her favour and regard, not only furnishing her handsomely with apparel, but taking her as a companion, on her visits to the most rich and noble families, so that Zerlina was thus introduced to much gaiety and splendour. Her heart, notwithstanding, ached oftentimes under her silken dresses, for in spite of the favour of the Countess, she met with many slights from the proud and wealthy, on account of her humble origin, as well as much envy and malice from persons of her own condition. She fell therefore into a deep melancholy, and being interro-

gated by the Countess, she declared that she pined for her former humble but happy estate: and begged with all humility that she might return to her native village.

The Countess being much surprised as well as grieved at this confession, enquired if she had ever given her cause to repent of her protection, to which Zerlina replied with many grateful tears, but still avowing the ardour of her wishes.

"Let me return," said she, "to my own homely life; this oppressive splendour dazzles and bewilders me. I feel by a thousand humiliating misgivings and disgraces, that it is foreign to my nature; my defects of birth and manners making me shrink continually within myself, whilst those who were born for its blaze, perceive readily that I belong to an obscurer race, and taunt me with jests and indignities for intruding on their sphere. Those also, who should be my equals, are quite as bitter against me for overstepping their station, so that my life is thus a

round of perpetual mortifications and uneasiness. Pray, therefore, absolve me of ingratitude, if I long to return to my native and proper shades—with their appointed habits. I am dying, like the poor owl, for lack of my natural obscurity."

The curiosity of the Countess being awakened by her last expression, Zerlina related to her the story of that unfortunate bird, and applied it with a very touching commentary to her own condition; so that the Countess was affected even to the shedding of tears: she immediately comprehended the moral, and carrying back Zerlina to her native village, she bestowed her future favour so judiciously, that instead of being a misfortune, it secured the complete happiness of the pretty peasant.

THE GERMAN KNIGHT.

Of breaking spears, of ringing helm and shield,
A dreadful rumour roar'd on every side:
There lay a horse; another through the field
Ran masterless,—dismounted was his guide.

GODFREY OF BULLOIGNE.

THE GERMAN KNIGHT.

THERE is an old proverb, that some jokes are cut-throats; meaning that certain unlucky jests are apt to bring a tragical ending,—a truth which has been confirmed by many instances, besides that one which I am about to relate.

At the memorable siege of Vienna by the French, in the year ——, the inhabitants enrolled themselves in great numbers for the defence of the city, and amongst these was one Lodowic, a man of dull intellect and a hasty temper, but withal of a slow courage. He was not one of the last, however, to volunteer; for there was a lady in the back-ground who ex-

cited him, with an extraordinary eagerness, to take up arms against the common enemy.

It is notorious that the Germans, though phlegmatic, are a romantic people in their notions; the tales of chivalry, the mysteries of Odin, and diabolical legends, being their most favourite studies. In affairs of business they are plodding, indefatigable, and of an extraordinary patience, their naturalists having counted cod's eggs, by millions, beyond any other people; and in their extravagant flights they equally surpass the rest of mankind, even as it has been observed of the most sedate drudge-horses, that they kick up highest of any when turned out free into the meadow.

Dorothea, for so the lady was called, partook largely of the national bias; and in truth, for her own peace and contentment, should have lived some centuries sooner, when the customs recorded by the minnesingers and troubadours were the common usages. In her own times, it was a novelty to see a young maiden so over-

delighted as she was at the dedication of her lover to deeds of arms and bloodshed; as if, forsooth, he had been going only to tilt with a blunted lance at a holiday tournament, instead of the deadly broil with the French in which he was engaged. With her own hand she embroidered for him a silken scarf, in the manner of the damsels of yore, and bereaved her own headgear to bedeck his helmet with a knightly plume. For it was one of her fancies, that Lodowic should go forth to the war in the costume of her ancestors, from whose armoury she selected a suit of complete steel, which had been worn aforetime in the Holy Land.

The timid spirit of the German made him willingly entrench himself in a coat of mail, and its security helped him to overlook the undue alacrity with which the lady of his love commended him to the bloody field. Not a tear did she spend at the buckling on of his cuirass, nor a single sigh at the delivery of his shield.

" Return with this," said the hard-hearted one, " or upon it,"—a benediction which she had learned of the Spartan heroine.

It was noon, when the redoubtable Lodowic rode forth thus accoutred to join his troop on the parade. His horse, scared by the clattering of the armour, made many desperate plunges by the way, to the manifest derangement of his scarf, and still more of his plumes, which began to droop down his nape in a very unseemly fashion. The joints of his armour being stiff with the rust of age, he had no great command of his limbs, nor was he very expert or graceful in the management of his lance. As for his shield, he had found convenient to cast it amongst certain gossiping housewives in the street; so that, in extremity, he could fulfil neither of the Spartan conditions.

The common people, who have hawks' eyes for any grotesque figure, shouted lustily after him as he rode, which attracted the general notice of his troop to that quarter, and as soon

as they perceived his uncouth habiliments, set off as they were by his imperturbable German gravity, there was a tumult of laughter and derision along the whole line.

Now it happened that there belonged to this troop an adjutant, a special friend of Lodowic, but, on this occasion, the most bitter of his mockers. A hundred merry jests he passed upon the unlucky man-at-arms, till at last the incensed Paladin beckoned him a pace or two apart, and after a short but angry conference, returned with his face at a white heat to his mistress, and informed her of the event.

"Now this adventure," said the cruel one, "falls out better than I hoped. Thou shalt cast down thy gauntlet in defiance of this uncourteous knight; and though there be no royal lists appointed in these days, ye may have, notwithstanding, a very honourable and chivalrous encounter."

"As for that, Madam," returned Lodowic, "the matter is settled, and without throwing

about any gloves at all. I have dared him to meet me to-morrow at sunrise, by the Linden Wood; and one way or another I dare say something desperate will be done between us."

The hard-hearted one, highly in love with this news, embraced Lodowic very tenderly, and, to mark her grace towards him still farther, gave him her glove to wear as a favour during the impending combat. She selected for him, moreover, a new suit of armour, and gave him a fresh shield against any disaster,—a provision which the knight acknowledged with equal gratitude and gravity. And now she had nothing left but to dream, waking or sleeping, of the wager of battle of the morrow; whereas, Lodowic closed his eyes no more through the night, than if he had been watching his arms in a church.

As soon as the cocks began to crow, which he heard with as much pleasure as St. Peter, he put on his arms, and set forth whilst the morning was yet at a grey light. There is no chill

so deathlike and subtle, as that which springs up with the vapourish damps before sunrise, and Lodowic soon found himself all over in a cold sweat, answerable to that of the earth. Thoughts of death, beside, began now to be busy within him; the very crimson rents and fissures of the eastern sky suggesting to him the gaping of the gory wounds which might soon be inflicted on his miserable body—for he knew that even the iron defences of the olden knights had not exempted them from such cruel slashes. In the mean time, he studied a pacific discourse, which he trusted would heal up the quarrel better than either sword or lance; and in this Christian temper he arrived at the appointed place. There was no one yet visible within the narrow obscure horizon; wherefore he paced his horse slowly up and down in front of the Linden Wood, between which and himself there flowed a small murmuring stream.

After about twenty turns to and fro, Lodowic

beheld some one emerging from the trees, whom the mist of the morning would not let him perfectly distinguish. However, the pale light of the sun began presently to glance upon the figure, turning it from a dark object to a bright one, so that it gleamed out like the rivulet, which stood at nearly the same distance. The figure leaped his horse over the brook with a slight noise that sounded like the jingling of arms, and coming gently into the foreground, Lodowic discerned that it was the Adjutant, in a suit of complete armour. At this sight, he was very much puzzled whether to take it as a new affront or as an apology, that the other came thus, in a suit of the kind that had begotten their difference; but how monstrous was his rage, to discover that it was only a burlesque armour—the helmet being merely a pewter bason, and the shield the cover of a large iron pot. The mocker, pursuing his original jest in this indiscreet way, had prepared a set speech for the encounter.

" You see, Cousin," said he, " that I meet you at your own arms. Here is my helmet to match with yours, and this my buckler is made after the model of your own; here is my corslet too"—but before he could achieve the comparison, his horse was staggering from the rush of the choleric Lodowic, whose spear, whether by accident or design, was buried deep in the other's bosom. The wounded man gave but one groan, and fell backward, and the horse of Lodowic taking fright at the clatter of the armour, started off at full gallop, throwing his rider side by side with the bleeding wretch upon the grass.

As soon as he recovered from the shock, Lodowick got up and gazed with fixed eyes on the wounded man. He was lying on his back, staring dreadfully against the sky; one of his hands was clenched about the handle of the cruel spear—the other he kept striking with mere anguish against the ground, where it soon became dabbled in a pool of blood that had

flowed from his wound. Anon, drawing it in a fresh agony across his brow, his face likewise was smeared over with the gore, making altogether so shocking a picture that Lodowic was ready to swoon away upon the spot.

"In the name of God," he cried, "tell me, my dearest friend, that you are not mortally hurt"—but the wounded man made answer only by a horrible roll of his eyes, and so expired.

Imagine what a dreadful sharp pang of remorse went through the bosom of Lodowic at this dreary spectacle. His heart felt cold within him, like a ball of snow, but his head was burning with a tumult of remorseful and miserable thoughts, together with some most painful misgivings, as to the disposition of his mistress, which now began to show at variance with loveliness and womanhood. But it was time to begone, the country people beginning to stir about the fields; so casting off the accursed armour, which now pained him through and

through, like Nessus's poisoned shirt, he ran off, bewildered, he knew not whither.

Shortly after his departure, the hard-hearted Dorothea, with her woman, arrived at the spot —and lo! there lay the dead body of the Adjutant, with the spear still sticking upright in his bosom. I know not how such a fortitude consists with the female nature, but she looked on this dreadful object with all the serenity of a lady in old romance. Her only concern was to behold the armour of Lodowic scattered so shamefully about, for she had resolved that he should repair to her with all the chivalrous formality. Returning home, therefore, with great scorn and anger in her looks, she promised to visit the unfortunate knight with a rigorous penance; but she saw no more of Lodowic, except the following letter, which was brought to her the same evening by a peasant.

MADAM:—I send you by this page your glove, stained with the blood of the traitor, for-

merly my friend. It grieves me that I cannot lay it with my own hands at your feet, but a vow binds me to achieve deeds more worthy of your beauty, and my devotion. To-morrow I set forth for Cyprus, and I shall not think myself entitled to your presence till I have strung the heads of a score of Turks at my saddle-bow. Till then, I remain in all loyalty, your true knight, LODOWIC.

The hard-hearted one perused this letter with an equal mixture of delight and doubt, for the style of the German, hitherto, had been neither quaint nor heroical. She waited many long years, you may believe, for the heads of the Infidels. In the mean time, Lodowic had passed over into England, where he married the widow of a refiner, and soon became an opulent sugar-baker; for though he still had some German romantic flights, on an occasion, he was as steady and plodding as a blind mill-horse in his business.

THE FLORENTINE KINSMEN.

THE

FLORENTINE KINSMEN.

It is a true proverb, that we are hawks in discerning the faults of others, but buzzards in spying out our own: and so is the other, that no man will act wickedly before a mirror; both of which sayings, I hope to illustrate in the following story.

The hereditary domains of the Malatesti, formerly a very ancient and noble family of Florence, were large and princely, though now they are alienated and parcelled out amongst numerous possessors; and the race which then

owned them is extinct. After many generations, the greater portion of the estates descended to a distant relation of the house, and the remainder to his kinsman, who had already some very large possessions of his own.

This man, notwithstanding he was so rich, and able to live, if he chose, in the greatest luxury and profusion, was still so covetous as to cast an envious and grudging eye on the property of his noble kinsman, and he did nothing but devise secretly how he should get the rest of the estates of the Malatesti into his own hands. His kinsman, however, though generous and hospitable, was no prodigal or gambler, likely to stand in need of usurious loans; neither a dissolute liver, that might die prematurely, nor a soldier; but addicted to peaceful literary studies, and very temperate in his habits.

The miserly man, therefore, saw no hope of obtaining his wishes, except at the price of blood—and he did not scruple at last to admit

this horrible alternative into his nightly meditations. He resolved, therefore, to bribe the notorious Pazzo, a famous robber of that time, to his purpose: but ashamed, perhaps, to avow his inordinate longings, even to a robber, or else grudging the high wages of such a servant of iniquity, he afterwards revoked this design, and took upon his own hands the office of an assassin.

Accordingly he invited his unsuspecting kinsman, with much specious kindness, to his own house, under a pretence of consulting him on some rare old manuscripts, which he had lately purchased, a temptation which the other was not likely to resist. He repaired, therefore, very readily to the miser's country seat, where they spent a few days together very amicably though not sumptuously: but the learned gentleman was contented with the entertainment, which he hoped to meet with in the antique papyri. At last, growing more impatient than was strictly polite to behold the manuscripts, he enquired

for them so continually, that his crafty host thought it was full time to show him an improvement which he had designed upon his estate, and which intended, as may be guessed, the addition of another territory to his own.

The gentleman, who, along with alchemy and the other sciences, had studied landscape gardening, made no difficulties; so mounting their horses, they rode towards the middle of the estate into a deep forest, the gentleman discoursing by the way, for the last time in his life possibly, on the cultivation of the cedar. The miser, with a dagger in his sleeve, rode closely by his side, commenting from time to time on the growth of his trees, and at length bade his companion look towards the right, through a certain little vista, which opened towards the setting sun, now shining very gorgeously in the west. The unwary gentleman, accordingly turned his head on that side—but he had scarcely glanced on that golden light of heaven, when the miser suddenly smote him a savage

blow on the left breast, which tumbled him off his horse.

The stroke, however, though so well directed, alighted luckily on a small volume of a favourite author, which the gentleman wore constantly in his bosom. So that learning, which has brought so many to poverty and a miserable end, was for this once the salvation of a life.

At first the victim was stunned awhile by the fall, and especially by the shocking treachery of his relation, who seeing how matters went, leapt quickly down to dispatch him, but the gentleman, though a scholar, made a vigorous defence, and catching hold of the miser's arm with the dagger, he began to plead in very natural terms (for at other times he was a little pedantical) for his life.

"Oh, my kinsman," said he, "why will you kill me, who have never wished you any harm in my days, but on the contrary have always loved you faithfully, and concerned myself at every opportunity about your health and well-

fare. Consider, besides, I beg of you, how nearly we are allied in blood: though it is a foul crime for any man to lift an unbrotherly hand against another, yet in our case it is thrice unnatural. Remember the awful curse of Cain; which for this very act will pursue you: and for your own sake as well as mine, do not incur so terrible a penalty. Think how presumptuous it is to take a life of God's own gracious creation, and to quench a spark, which, in after remorse, you cannot by any means rekindle; nay, how much more horrible it must be still, to slay an immortal soul, as you thus hazard, by sending me to my audit with all my crimes still unrepented upon my head. Look here at this very blood, which you have drawn from my hand in our struggle, how naturally it reproaches and stains you; for which reason, God doubtless made it of that blushing hue, that it might not be shed thus wantonly. This little wound alone, wrings me with more pain than I have ever caused to

any living creature, but you cannot destroy me without still keener anguish and the utmost agonies." And why, indeed, should you slay me? not for my riches, of which we have both of us more than enough, or if you wanted, Heaven knows how freely I would share my means with you. I cannot believe you so base as to murder me for such unprofitable lucre, but doubtless I have offended you, in some innocent way, to provoke this malice. If I have, I will beseech your pardon a thousand times over, from the simple love that I bear you; but do not requite me for an imaginary wrong so barbarously. Pray, my dear kinsman, spare me! Do not cut me off thus untimely in the happy prime of my days,—from the pleasant sunshine, and from the blessed delights of nature, and from my harmless books, (for he did not forget those) and all the common joys of existence. It is true, I have no dear wife or children to weep for me, but I have many kindly friends that will grieve

for my death, besides all the poor peasants on my estates, who will fall, I fear, under a harder lordship. Pray, my kinsman, spare me!"

But the cruel miser, in reply, only struggled to release himself, and at last prevailing, he smote the other once or twice again with his dagger, but not dangerously.

Now it happened that the noted robber Pazzo, whom I have already mentioned, was making a round in the forest at the same time with the two kinsmen, and thanking providence, that had thrown into his path so rich a prize, (for the rogue was very devout in his own way,) he watched them along the road, for a favourable opportunity of assaulting them, and so became a witness of this murderous transaction.

Pazzo himself was a brave man, and not especially cruel; thus he was not sorry to see that a part of his office was about to be performed by another, and probably too, he was secretly gratified, to observe that a rich and reputable man could behave himself so like a despised

robber: howbeit, he no ways interfered, but warily ambushed himself behind a large cork tree to behold the sequel.

He was near enough to hear all the speeches that passed between them, so that having still some human kindliness at the bottom of his heart, it was soon awakened by the gentleman's eloquent pleadings for his life: but when the assassin began to attack him afresh, the cruelty of the act struck on him so forcibly, that he instantly leaped out upon the blood-thirsty miser, and tore him down to the ground. He was then going to dispatch him without further delay, but the generous kinsman entreating most earnestly for the wretch's life, and promising any sum for his ransom, Pazzo, with great reluctance, allowed him to remain unhurt. He bound his hands together, notwithstanding, and detained him as his prisoner; but he would accept of no money, nor of any favour from the grateful gentleman, except a promise that he would use his interest with government in be-

half of any of the banditti who should fall into the hands of the police.

They then parted with mutual courtesy; the gentleman returning home, and Pazzo repairing with his captive to the mountains, where he bestowed him as a legacy to his comrades, desiring them to liberate him only for an enormous ransom. This sum was soon sent to their rendezvous, as agreed upon by his kinsman; whereupon the miser was suffered to depart; and thenceforwards he cherished a gentleness of heart, which he had been taught to value by some sufferings amongst the mountains.

As for the gentleman, he resumed his harmless and beloved studies, till being over persuaded to publish a metaphysical work, on which he had been engaged for some years, the critics did for him what his kinsman had been unable to effect, and he died of chagrin. The miser thus attained in the end to his object, of inheriting the whole of the estates; but he en-

joyed them very briefly, and on his death the family of Malatesti became extinct.

The ransom-money Pazzo distributed amongst his comrades, and then renounced for ever his former course of life; confessing that what had passed between the two kinsmen had held up to him such an odious pattern of his own wicked practices, that he repented bitterly of the acts of violence and injustice he had committed in his profession. In this manner he justified the sayings with which I set out in my story; and afterwards, entering into the Venetian navy, he served with great credit against the Turks and infidels, and died at last bravely fighting with those enemies of our religion.

THE CARRIER'S WIFE.

"It 's O for meat, it 's O for drink,
And love the best of all the three!
Though gear is scant, I 'd never want,
An' my good man were kind to me."

OLD BALLAD.

THE CARRIER'S WIFE.

In the suburbs of Strasburg there lived a certain poor woman, by trade a sempstress, who was called Margaret. She was of the middle age; but so cheerful and sweet tempered, and besides so comely, and of such honest repute, that many tradesmen of respectable condition would have been glad to marry her. She had contracted herself, however, to one Kolmarr; a plausible fellow and a carrier, but in reality a smuggler and a very ruffian. Accordingly, whilst their honeymoon was yet in the wane, he began to use her very shamefully, till at last she was worse treated than his mules;

upon which he made her to attend whilst he was smoking and drinking with his dissolute comrades.

Margaret, notwithstanding, being very humble and industrious, would never have repined at this drudgery; but on any ill luck which happened to him, his contraband wares being sometimes seized upon by the spies, he would beat her in a cruel manner. She concealed this treatment, however, from every body, hoping some day to reclaim him by her kindness—never reproaching him, indeed, but by haggard and careful looks, which she could not help, for she shrank as often under the pinching hand of want as from that of her brutal husband. Her beauty and strength thus decaying together, she became at last so disgusting to him, that if he had not been as cautious and crafty as he was cruel, he would have killed her without delay. As it was, he almost starved her, professing extreme poverty; at which Margaret

never murmured, but only grieved for his sake over his pretended losses.

One day, as she was thus sitting disconsolate at her needle-work, and thinking over her hard condition, she heard a gentle knocking at the door, and going to see who it was, she beheld her cousin, a pedlar, who travelled through the country with his box of wares. At first sight of him she was very joyful, not having seen him for many years, but her heart soon sank again into despondence, when she remembered how wretchedly she must entertain him, if at all; for if Kolmarr knew that she bestowed even a crust of bread, he would certainly beat her. She bade her relation, however, to come in and rest himself.

"Alas!" she said, "I have nothing to give thee for thy supper, the house is so bare; and what is worse, I dare not make amends to thee with a night's lodging, for my husband is a very shy, reserved man, who cannot endure the pre-

sence of a stranger: if he found any one here, therefore, at his return, although he is kind enough upon other occasions, he would certainly chide me."

Her kinsman, after musing a little while over these words, answered her thus:

"Margaret, I perceive how it is. But do not be uneasy: the best houses may be found unprovided by a random comer. I am prepared, you see, against such emergencies: here is a flask of good wine, with a dried fish or two, and a handful of raisins,—of which I shall be glad to see you partake. Come, fall to;" and laying out his stores upon the table, he began to sup merrily.

Margaret, at this sight, was more alarmed than ever; nevertheless, after many persuasions she began to eat also, but casting her eyes continually towards the door, as if she feared a visit from an Apennine wolf. The time still drawing nearer for Kolmarr to return, she begged her kinsman to dispatch his meal, as he

loved her, and then depart. "I will even do as you say," said he, still misunderstanding her; "so now show me to my chamber."

To this, Margaret in great alarm replied with what she had told him before, beseeching him not to take it ill of her that he could not sleep in her house; but to believe that she regarded it as one of her many misfortunes.

"I understand you," said he, "very well; but pray make me no more such excuses. I have told you I am not a man to quarrel with my accommodation. Though the bed be harder, and the sheets more coarse and ragged than you care to treat me with—I should lie very thankfully on the floor. So no words, woman, for hence I will not to-night for a king's bed of down."

Margaret, finding him so positive, and observing, besides, that he was flushed with wine, was fain to humour him; however, as she knew he was a discreet man, and that he would depart before sunrise, she hoped he might be

lodged there that one night without the knowledge of Kolmarr. She took him up, therefore, into the garret, which contained nothing but a low sorry bed and a long stout rope, which Kolmarr had left there, probably, to tempt her to hang herself; for she had sometimes slept there alone when he ill-treated her. Her cousin, nevertheless, swore that it was a lodging for a prince.

"Nay," quoth she, "you are kind enough to view it so; but it is grievously troubled with the rats, as I have had cause to know;" and then hastily bidding him good night, she went down the stairs again, with her eyes brimful of tears.

After she had been down a little while, Kolmarr knocked at the door, which made Margaret almost fall from her chair. He came in soberly, but in a grave humour, and observing how red her eyes were, he pulled her to him, and kissed her with much apparent affection. The poor woman was too full at

heart to speak; but throwing her lean arms round his neck, she seemed to forget in that moment all her troubles; and still more when Kolmarr, with a terrible oath, swore that after that night he would never fret her again.

The grateful Margaret, being very humble and weak-spirited, was ready to fall down on her knees to him for this unusual kindness, and her conscience smiting her, she was just going to confess to him the concealment of her cousin, and to beseech his forgiveness for that disobedience, as the first she had ever committed as his wife. But luckily she held her peace, for her fears still prevailed over her; and on these terms they bestowed themselves together for the night.

Now it was Kolmarr's custom of a night, to pay a visit to his stable; he, as a rogue himself, being very fearful of the dishonesty of others; for which reason he likewise locked behind him the door of his bed-chamber, in which he deposited his commodities. About midnight, there-

fore, Margaret heard him go down as usual, but his stay was three times as long as ever it had been before. She became very uneasy at this circumstance; and moreover, at a strong smoke which began to creep into the chamber; whereupon, going to the window, she heard Kolmarr beneath, moaning like a person in great pain. In answer to her questions, he told her he had been beaten by some robbers, who had taken away his mules, and then set fire to the house.

"The back of it," said he, "is all wrapt in a flame; but what most grieves me of all, my dear Margaret, is that I cannot rescue thee; seeing that in my strife with the villains, I have lost the key of the outer-door. Nevertheless, if thou wilt take courage and cast thyself down, I will catch thee in my arms; or at the worst, I have dragged hither a great heap of straw, so that no harm may befal thy precious limbs."

The crafty ruffian, however, intended her no kinder reception than the hard bare earth would afford to her miserable bones. His brutality being well known in the country, he did not care to kill her openly; whereas, in this way he hoped to make it apparent that her death was caused by accident; and besides, as it would be in a manner by her own act, he flattered himself there would be the less guilt upon his head.

The window being very far from the ground, Margaret, however, hesitated at the fall: and in the meantime the pedlar awaked; and smelling the smoke, and going forth to the window above, he overheard the entreaties of Kolmarr. The danger, by his account, was very imminent; so stepping in again for his pack, which was very heavy, the pedlar pitched it out in the dark upon Kolmarr; who immediately began to groan in the most dismal earnest. The pedlar, knowing how heavy the box was,

and hearing the crash, with the lamentations that followed, made no doubt that he had done for the man beneath; so, without staying to make any fruitless enquiries, he groped about for the rope which he had noticed in the chamber, and knotting it here and there, and tying one end of it to the bed, he let himself down, as nimbly as a cat, to his kinswoman's window. Margaret, touched by the moans of her husband, had just made up her mind to leap down at a venture, when the pedlar withheld her; and being very stout and active, he soon made shift to lower her down safely to the ground, and then followed himself, like a sailor, by means of the rope.

As soon as Margaret was on her feet, she sought for Kolmarr, who by this time was as quiet as a stone, and made no answer to her enquiries; the pedlar, therefore, concluded justly that he was dead, and speedily found out with his fingers, that there was a great hole in the

wretch's skull. At first he was very much shocked and troubled by this discovery; but afterwards, going behind the house, and seeing the smouldering remains of a heap of straw, which Kolmarr had lighted, he comprehended the whole matter, and was comforted. Then bringing Margaret, who was lamenting very loudly, to the same spot, he showed her the ashes, and told her how foolish it was to mourn so for a wicked man, who had died horribly through his own plotting against her life.

"The devices of the bloody man," said he, "have fallen upon his own head. Consider this, therefore, as the good deed of Providence, which, pitying your distresses, has ordained you a happier life hereafter; and for your maintenance, if God should fail to provide you, I will see to it myself."

In this manner, comforting her judiciously, Margaret dried her tears, reflecting as many women do, but with less reason, that she must

needs be happier as a widow than she had ever been as a wife. As for what he had promised, her kinsman faithfully kept his word, sending her from time to time a portion of his gains; so that, with her old trade of sempstress, and the property of Kolmarr, she was maintained in comfort, and never knew want all the rest of her days.

THE TWO

FAITHFUL LOVERS OF SICILY.

Our bark at length has found a quiet harbour,
And the unspotted progress of our loves
Ends not alone in safety but reward.

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.

THE TWO

FAITHFUL LOVERS OF SICILY.

In the Island of Sicily, there lived a beautiful girl called Biancafiore, whose father was a farmer of the imposts in that kingdom; she had several lovers, but the happiest one was Tebaldo Zanche, a young person of gentle birth but of indifferent estate, which caused him to be more favourably regarded by Bianca than her father desired, who had set his heart upon matching her with a certain wealthy merchant of Palermo. The power of a parent in those days being much more despotic than in our temperate times, the poor wretched girl was finally compelled to

bestow her hand on the merchant, whereupon Tebaldo instantly took leave of his country, and with a hopeless passion at heart wandered over Europe.

As soon as she was married, Bianca was taken by her husband to his country-house, which was situated on the sea-coast, towards Girgenti, his chief delight being to watch the ships, as they fared to and fro on their mercantile embassies, whereas they only recalled to Bianca the small white sail which had disappeared with the unfortunate Tebaldo. This prospect of itself was sufficient to aggravate her melancholy, but her residence on the sea-shore was yet to expose her to still greater miseries.

It was not uncommon in those days, for the Barbary cruisers, those hawks of the Mediterranean, to make a sudden stoop upon our coasts, and carry off with them, besides other plunder, both men and women, whom they sold into slavery amongst the Moors, in default of ransom. In this manner, making a descent by night

when Mercanti was absent at Palermo, they burnt and plundered his house, and took away Bianca; whose horror you may well conceive, when by the blazing light of her own dwelling, she was carried off by such swarthy barbarians, whose very language was a sphynx's riddle to her, and might concern her life or death, and then embarked upon a sea of fire; for there happened that night a phenomenon not unusual in the Mediterranean, namely, the phosphorescence of the waters, which, whether caused by glowing marine insects or otherwise, makes the waves roll like so many blue burning flames. Those who have witnessed it, know well its dismal appearance on a gloomy night, when the billows come and vanish away like fluxes of pallid fire, and withal so vapour-like and unsubstantial, that apparently the vessel, or any gross corporal substance, must needs sink into its ghastly abyss. With such a dreary scene, therefore, and in the midst of those tawny-coloured infidel Moors, with their savage visages

and uncouth garments and glittering arms, 'tis no marvel if Bianca thought herself amongst infernals and the demons of torture, on the sulphurous lake.

On the morrow, which scarcely brought any assuagement of her fears, they had lost sight of Sicily, and at last she was disembarked at Oran, which is an African port, over against Spain. Meanwhile Tebaldo was landing at Palermo, where he learnt, with a renewal of all his pangs, the fate of his beloved mistress. Forgetting all his enmity, therefore, he repaired presently to Mercanti, to concert with him how to redeem her out of the hands of the accursed Moors, a proceeding which he would not have paused for, had fortune put it in his power to proceed instantly to her ransom.

The merchant lamenting his years and infirmities, which forbade him to go in search of his wife, Tebaldo readily offered himself to proceed in his behalf; adding, "that it was only through the poverty of his means that he had not sailed

already at his own suggestion, but that if Mercanti would furnish him with the requisite sums, he should hope to restore the unfortunate Bianca to his arms." The merchant wondering very much at this proposal, and asking, what securities he could offer for such a trust,—

"Alas!" quoth Tebaldo, "I have nothing to pledge for my performance, except an unhappy love for her, that would undergo thrice-told perils for her sake; I am that hopeless Tebaldo Zanche, who was made so eminently miserable by her marriage: nevertheless, I will forgive that, as well as all other mischances, if I may but approve my honourable regard for her, by this self-devoted service. There are yet some reasonable doubts you may well entertain of my disinterestedness and fidelity on such a mission, and I know not how to remove them; but when you think of the dangerous infidels in whose hands she now is, I have a hope that you may bring yourself to think her as safe at least in mine."

The passionate Tebaldo enforced these arguments with so many sincere tears and solemn oaths, and, besides, depicted so naturally the horrible condition of the lady amongst the Moors, that at last the merchant consented to his request, and furnishing him with the proper authorities, the generous lover, with a loyal heart, which designed nothing less than he had professed, set sail on his arduous adventure.

Let us pass over the hardships and dangers of such an enterprize, and above all its cruel anxieties, the hopes which were raised at Tunis being wrecked again at Algiers, till at last he discovered Bianca amongst the slaves of a chief pirate at Oran, who, despairing of a ransom, began to contemplate her as his own mistress. Tebaldo's bargain was soon made; whereupon the lady was set at liberty, and to her unspeakable joy, by the hands of her own beloved Zanche; yet when they remembered the final consequence of her freedom, the brightness of their delight was quenched with some

very bitter tears. The generosity of their natures, however, triumphed over these regrets, and with sad hearts, but full of virtuous resolution, they re-embarked together, in a Genoese carrack for Palermo.

And now their evil fortune still pursued them, for falling in with a Sallee rover, although they escaped a second capture by the fast-sailing of their ship, they were chased a long way out of their course, into the Straits of Gibraltar, and the wind turning contrary, increased towards night to a violent tempest. In this extremity it required all the tenderness of Tebaldo to encourage Bianca, whose low-spirited condition made her more fearfully alive to the horrors of the raging sea; which indeed roared round them as if the watery desert had hungry lions of its own, as well as the sandy wastes of Africa, but ten times more terrible; the ship's timbers, besides, straining as if they would part asunder, and the storm howling through the cordage, like the voices of those evil angels,

who, it is believed, were cast into the dreadful deep.

When the daylight appeared there was no glimpse of any land, but the ship was tossing in the centre of a mere wilderness of sea, and under the pitch-black and troubled clouds, which were still driving by a fierce wind towards the south. The sails were torn into shreds, and the mariners, ignorant of where they were, let the ship drift at the mercy of the unmerciful elements, which slacked not their fury because the prey no longer resisted, but assaulted the helpless bark with unmitigated rage.

It could be no great wrong of Tebaldo and Bianca, if, at such a time, they exchanged one embrace together in everlasting farewell. They then composed themselves to die calmly as became them, in each other's company; not with any vain shrieks or struggles; but heroically, as they had lived and loved. Thus sitting together in a martyr-like mood, and listening to the

awful rushes of the waters across the deck, they heard a sudden noise overhead, which caused Tebaldo to look forth, and, lo! there were the drunken mariners, putting off from the ship's side in the long-boat, being beguiled to their fate by a glimpse of land, which none but their experienced eyes could yet discover. However, they had not struggled far with their oars, when three monstrous curling billows, a great deal loftier than any of the rest, turned the boat over and over, washing out all the poor gasping souls that were therein, whom the ensuing waves swallowed up one by one, without letting even their dying cries be heard through the bewildering foam.

After this sacrifice, as though it had appeased the angry Deity of the ocean, the storm sensibly subsided; and in an hour or two, the skies clearing up, Tebaldo perceived that they were off a small solitary island—the ship soon after striking upon a coral reef, about two hundred fathoms from the shore. The skies still

frowning with a rearward storm, Tebaldo lost no time in framing a rude raft, with spars and empty barrels; upon which placing Bianca, with such stores and implements as he could collect, he paddled towards the land, where they landed safely upon a little sandy beach.

Their first act was to return thanks to God for their miraculous preservation: after which they partook of a repast, that after their fatigues was very needful; and then ascended a gentle sloping hill which gave them a prospect of the island. It was a small, verdant place, without any human inhabitants,—but there were millions of marine birds upon the rocks, as tame as domestic fowls, and a prodigious number of rabbits; the interior country, besides, seemed well wooded with various trees: and the ground furnished divers kinds of herbs, and some very gigantic vegetables, together with many European flowers, the transportation of which to such desolate and insular places is a mystery to this day.

The weather again turning boisterous, they took shelter in a rocky cavern, which the kind hand of Nature had scooped out so commodiously, that it seemed to have been provided with a foresight of their wants. Thus, with their stores from the ship, they were insured against any great present hardships—but one. Many unlucky lovers, I wot, have sighed for such an island, to take refuge in from the stern-hearted world; yet here were two such fond persons in such an asylum, betwixt whom fate had set up an eternal bar! Such thoughts as this could not but present themselves very sorrowfully to the minds of Tebaldo and Bianca; nevertheless, he served her with the most tender and devoted homage, and as love taught him, contributed, by a thousand apt contrivances, to her comfort and ease.

In this manner suppose them to spend five or six days—the cave being their shelter, and Tebaldo, by fishing, or fowling, or ensnaring the conies, providing a change of food; so that, ex-

cepting the original hardship of their fortune, the lovers had little cause to complain. Their solitary condition, however, and the melancholy of Bianca, led to many little acts of fondness from Tebaldo, which were almost as painful to exchange as to withhold. It was no wonder, then, if sometimes in the anguish of his heart, some expressions of impatience burst from his lips, to which she answered with her tears.

At last, one day when they were sitting on a gusty rock, which overlooked the sea, they both turned at once towards each other, with adverse faces and so despairing a look, that they cast themselves by common consent into each other's arms. In the next moment, however, forcing themselves asunder, Tebaldo began as follows, whilst Bianca covered her face with her hands:—

"I can bear this cruel life no longer! better were we far apart, as when you were living in Sicily, and I roaming for unattainable peace all over the world. The restraint of distance was

dreadful but involuntary, and nothing so painful as this! Your tears flow before my sight, yet I must not kiss them away without trembling, nor soothe your audible grief upon my bosom—nor mingle my sighs with yours, though we breathe the same limited air and not in a distant clime. We were made for each other, as our mutual love acknowledges; and yet here, where there be none besides ourselves, we must be several and estranged. My heart is torn asunder by such imperative contradictions. Methinks there be but us two real creatures in the world, and yet the horrible phantom of a third steps in between and frowns us miserably apart! Oh, Bianca! I am crazed with doubts I dare hardly to name; but if fate did not mean to unite us in revocation of its former cruelty, why should we be thus thrown together, where there are none besides? As eternal a bar as was set up between us, is now fixed between you and your husband; nature herself, by this hopeless separation, divorcing you from all

other ties. God knows with what scrupulous exactness I have aimed at the fulfilment of my promise—but it were hard to be bound to an impracticable solution. It was true we might not thus think of each other in Sicily—but we meet here as if beyond the grave. If we are, as I believe, in the forlorn centre of the vast ocean, what reasonable hope is there of our redemption:—since then, we are to spend the rest our days together in this place, we can wrong no one, but redress a great wrong to ourselves, by the stricter union of our fates, which are thus far already married together, until the tomb."

The miserable Bianca wept abundantly at this discourse: however, she begged that Tebaldo would not mention the subject for at least seven more days, in which time she hoped God might save them from such a step by sending some ship to their succour. She spent almost all this interval in watching from the coast, but still there came no vessel, not so much even as a speck on the horizon, to give

her any hope of return. Tebaldo then resuming his arguments, she answered him thus:—

" Oh, my dearest Tebaldo ! let us rather die as we have lived, victims of implacable fate, than cast any reproach upon our innocent loves. As it is, no one can reprove our affection, which, though violently controlled, we have never disavowed; but it would kill me to have to blush for its unworthy close. It is true that in one point we are disunited, but there is no distance between our souls. We may not indeed gratify our fondness by caresses, but it is still something to bestow our kindest language, and looks, and prayers, and all lawful and honest attentions upon each other; nay, do not you furnish me with the means of life and every thing that I enjoy? which my heart tells me must be a very grateful office to your love. Be content, then, to be the preserver and protector, and the very comforter of my life, which it is happiness enough for me to owe to your loving hands. It is true that another man is

my husband, but you are my guardian angel, and show a love for me that as much surpasses his love as the heavenly nature is above the earthly. I would not have you stoop from this pitch, as you needs must—by a defect of virtue and honour; still, if you insist, I will become what you wish, but I beseech you consider, ere that decision, the debasement which I must suffer in your esteem. Nevertheless, before such an evil hour, I hope God will send some ship to remove us, though, if I might prefer my own sinful will before His, I would rather of all be dead."

The despairing lovers at these words wished mutually in their hearts, that they had perished together in the waves that were fretting before them,—when Bianca, looking up towards the horizon, perceived the masts and topmost sails of a ship, whose hull was still hidden by the convexity of the waters. At this sight, though it had come seemingly at her own invocation, she turned as pale as marble, and with a falter-

ing voice bade Tebaldo observe the vessel, which with a deathlike gaze he had already fixed in the distance :—for doubtless they would rather have remained as they were till they died, than return to the separation which awaited them in Sicily :—however, the ship still approached with a fair wind, and at last put out a pinnace, which made directly towards the island.

And now Tebaldo became a bitter convertite from his own arguments, confessing that it was better to breathe only the same air constantly with Bianca, than to resign her companionship to another ; neither did she refuse to partake in his regrets : and more tears were never shed by any exiles on the point of returning to their native land. With heavy hearts, therefore, they descended, hand in hand, like the first pair of lovers when they quitted their paradise, to whom, no doubt, these sad Sicilians inwardly compared themselves, as they walked lingeringly to meet the boat, which belonged to a vessel of Genoa, and had been sent to obtain a supply

of wood and water. The mariners wondered very much at their appearance, and especially at Bianca, who wore a fantastical cap, made of rabbit skins, with a cloak of the same motley fur to defend her from the sharp sea air; and as for Tebaldo, his garments were as motley as hers, being partly seaman's apparel and partly his own, whilst his beard and mustaches had grown to a savage length.

The sailors, however, took them very willingly on board, where they inquired eagerly concerning Mercanti; but although the captain knew him well, having often carried his freightages, he could give no tidings of his estate. He promised, notwithstanding, to touch at Palermo; whither the ship made a very brief passage, to the infinite relief of the lovers; for now, after all their misfortunes, they were about to return to the same miserable point where they began. Bianca, therefore, spent the whole time of the voyage in grieving apart in her own cabin, not daring to trust herself in sight of

Tebaldo; who, on his part, at the prospect of their separation after such an intimate communion of danger and distresses, was ready to cast himself into the sea.

Suppose them, then, arrived at Palermo, where Tebaldo, with a sadder heart than he had foreseen, proceeded to complete his undertaking, by rendering up Bianca to her husband. He repaired, therefore, to the house, and inquired for Mercanti; whereupon, being shown into his presence—

"I am come," said he, "to render up my trust, and would to God that my life were a part of the submission. I have redeemed your wife, at the cost of your ten thousand florins and some perils besides; for which, if you owe me any thing, I leave her my executor, for I have nothing left me now but to die."

The merchant, looking somewhat amazed at his discourse, then answered him thus:—

"If the lady you speak of is the wife of my brother, Gio. Mercanti, he has been dead these

three months; but I shall rejoice to see her, and, likewise, to make over the properties that belong to her by his bequest. And for the eminent service you have rendered to her, for my late brother's sake, I will gratefully repay you; his last words having been full of concern for his dear lady, and of confidence in the integrity of the Signor Tebaldo Zanche; which name, I doubt not, you have made honourable in your own person. I beseech of you, therefore, to lead me instantly to my kinswoman, that I may entertain her as she deserves."

The overjoyed Tebaldo, without waiting to make any answer to these courtesies, ran instantly on board ship to Bianca; who now, without any reserve, cast herself into his loving arms. She did not forget, however, the tears that were due to the generosity of her dead husband, but mourned for him a decent season; after which, with the very good-will of her parents and all parties, she gave her hand to

the faithful Tebaldo. Thus, after many trials, which they endured nobly, they were finally made happy, as their long misfortunes and virtue well deserved; and their names are preserved unto this day, as the Two Faithful Lovers of Sicily.

THE VENETIAN COUNTESS.

" The fire straight upward bears the souls in breath :
Visions of horror circle in the flame,
With shapes and figures like to that of Death."

ALAHAM.

The Venetian Countefs.

Vol 2.

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T. Dighton.

Printed by C. Hullmandel.

THE VENETIAN COUNTESS.

THE face of the Countess Rovinello, in the portrait which is still in the family palace at Venice, bears many signs of that stern and gloomy disposition, which produced such bitter fruits in the end to herself and to others. The nose, more Roman than aquiline, resembling the features of the Cæsars, denotes forcibly her masculine firmness and determination of purpose; her dark eyes and lowering brow the pride of her heart, scarcely lower than that of the fallen Angel; and her puckered curling lip, the scorn and cruelty of her humour. Ambitious, inflexible, and haughty by nature, she was by education subtle, unmerciful, and

a bigot; the confessor Landino, a Jesuit, being constantly at her elbow, and holding the secret direction of all her affairs.

This man coming one day into her chamber, discovered the Countess in a fit of uncontrollable rage, a thing in her very unusual; for she disdained, generally, to show any outward signs of her emotions. Mistrustful, therefore, of her own voice, lest it should falter, she held out an open letter, her hand quaking all the time like an aspen leaf, and made a motion for Landino to read it; who, as soon as he had glanced at the writing, gave back the paper with these words:—

"This affair is old news with me. The blind passion of your son for the young English heretic was well known to me months ago, and nothing has been omitted to break off so scandalous a match. I have many skilful agents in England, but for this once they have been frustrated in their endeavours."

"Father," returned the offended Countess,

"you are prudent and wise in most cases: but would it not have been as well to have shared your information with myself. The authority of a mother, in such a matter, might have had some weight in the scale."

"We have not failed," said Landino, "to menace him in the name of the Holy Church, the mother of his soul, whose mandates in authority exceed those of the mother of his body. As for your ignorance, it was a needful precaution, that any acts of severity might seem the inflictions of the spiritual parent rather than your own."

The Countess nodded her head gravely at this speech, to signify that she understood the hint of Landino, notwithstanding she felt anger enough at heart to have made her agree to any measures, however cruel, for the prevention of so hateful a marriage. Her great confidence, however, in the skill and subtlety of the confessor, assured her that no means had been omitted for that design, and now it only remained to concert

together by what means they could separate the young people from each other. In the meanwhile, the artful Landino had craft enough to discover that the Countess meditated a match for her son, which would not have suited certain political views of his own; accordingly he changed his game, resolving that the marriage of Rovinelli and the young English lady should stand good, trusting that he could afterwards mould it to his purpose.

"What you say of separating them," he said, "is well enough, as far as the mere punishment of the parties is concerned: but we must look beyond that, to other considerations. Nothing would be more easy, as you know, than to annul the marriage, for which the Holy Church hath ample power and a sufficient good will; but it will be a more difficult thing to disentangle their affections from each other. Granted, then, though you should even tear away your son by force from the arms of the heretic, it will be impossible to drive him against his will into any

other alliance. As for the girl, she is of gentle birth and a large fortune, and for loveliness might be one of the angels, seeing which, it is a pity but to think on the peril of her immortal soul. Such a woman, as the wife of your son, brings us endless sorrow and shameful annoy, whereas such a convert, would tend to our infinite honour, and at the same time prevent the misery of the young people here, as well as the perdition of a soul hereafter."

The Countess understood clearly the drift of this discourse; and after some further arguments it was agreed, that she should receive the young people with an apparant kindness, and induce them to reside with her for some time at the palace, during which, she was to exert her joint influence with Landino, to convert the young lady to the Roman Catholic faith.

It was with many justifiable misgivings that Rovinello contemplated the introduction of his beautiful bride to his mother, for he knew her implacable nature. Notwithstanding, with the

fond imagination of a lover, he hoped that the loveliness and gentle manners of his mistress would finally overcome even the most stubborn of prejudices. Trusting in this delusion, he took his wife to the palace of the Countess, who was sitting, when they entered, on a couch at the further end of the apartment; but Rovinello could perceive a look on her countenance that filled him with despair; for her dark eyes were fixed upon him quite motionless, like those of a statue, and her lips were utterly white through passionate compression. Notwithstanding that the young pair had advanced to the middle of the chamber, she never rose from her seat, till Rovinello, coming up to her very feet, with a faltering voice presented the young lady to her notice.

The inflexible Countess, in return, merely fixed her eyes on the Englishwoman, who at this strange reception began to shake all over with fear; and the more, because she felt the

hand of Rovinello trembling within her own. After a long silence, more dreadful than any words, the timid creature, plucking up her courage a little, began to speak as follows, with great sweetness of tone and manner:—

"Pray, madam, do not scorn to receive me as your child, for I have no parent in this far off land, unless the mother of my dear Rovinello. I cannot bear to think that I am hateful to any one that regards him with affection: pray, therefore, do not spurn me thus from your heart."

At the last of these words, the Countess rose up, and with a tone at once calm and stern, and a befitting look, desired the young lady to kneel down and receive her blessing. The obedient girl, with bended knees and clasped hands, stooped down as she was commanded, at the feet of the haughty Countess; and in this position heard, but only half comprehended, in Latin, the following sentences:—

"From my mouth and from my heart, I

curse thee, wicked heretic. I commend thee to flames here, and to flames hereafter. Amen. Amen."

I have said that the Englishwoman did not quite comprehend these words; but she saw by the ghastly countenance of Rovinello that they were very horrible. As for that unhappy gentleman, he let go the hand of his wife, and grasping his forehead between his palms, as though it were about to burst asunder, he staggered a step or two apart, and leaned quite stunned and bewildered against the wall of the chamber. His cruel mother noticing this movement, cast a fiercer look than ever towards the speechless lady, and then turning towards Rovinello, addressed him thus:—

"Son, thou hast come home to me this day after years of travel; but in such a manner, that I would rather behold thee crucified;" and with that she pointed to a large ebony cross, whereon was the figure of our blessed Saviour curiously carved in ivory; the holy blood-drops

being represented by rubies, so as to form a more lively effigy of the divine sacrifice.

It was made evident by these speeches, that the implacable temper of the Countess had overcome all the counsels of Landino, who entered just at this moment, to perceive that his arguments had been in vain. He reproved her with some asperity, for her unchristian spirit, and her temper being by this time cool enough to be restrained by policy, by dint of much dissembling there was an apparent reconciliation between all the parties. Thus, it was arranged as had been concerted beforehand, Rovinello consenting, with great satisfaction, to pass some months with his wife in the palace of his mother.

The unhappy Englishwoman, however, though now living under the same roof with the Countess, and caressed by her every day, began soon to find this reconcilement more intolerable than the former estrangement. At length, Rovinello seeing her grow more and more dejected,

her beautiful eyes being filled with tears whenever he returned to her, after even an hour's absence, began to inquire the cause.

" Alas !" she said, " I have cause enough to weep; for I am treated here with such a cruel kindness, that but for your dear love, I should wish myself a hundred times a day in my peaceable grave ;—for I am assured, every hour, that the souls of my dear honoured parents are at this very time suffering unspeakable torments; a saying which, whether true or false, ought to cost me a great deal of misery or displeasure. To aggravate these feelings, the confessor Landino exhorts me so constantly to secure myself from the like perdition, that satisfied with a heart to love thee withal, I wish, sometimes, that I had no soul at all to care for."

Having spoken thus with some bitterness of manner, she again fell a weeping; whereupon, Rovinello, touched with her tears, declared that her peace should no longer be assailed by such arguments; and in truth, having sojourned

some years in England, his own sentiments on such matters partook of the liberality and freedom which belong seemingly to the very atmosphere of that fortunate country. Accordingly, after making various excuses to his mother, he set off with his lady to a country-seat, which was situated on the sea-coast; and here they lived together for some months very happily.

At the end of that time, Rovinello received one day a letter which required his immediate attendance at Rome, and taking a very tender farewell of his lady, he departed. His affairs detained him four or five days at the capital, and then he returned home with all possible speed, indulging in a thousand fanciful pictures by the way, of his wife's joyful endearments at his return; whereas, when he reached the house, he was told that she had been carried off by force, no one knew whither; the servants being taken away likewise in the middle of the night. A Moorish turban, which had been left in one

of the rooms, supplied the only clue for discovery of her destiny, for in those days it was a common thing for the Algerine rovers to make a descent on the Italian coasts. The distracted Rovinello, therefore, went instantly on ship-board, and required to be carried over to Africa, intending at all perils to ransom his dear lady, or partake of the same captivity. There happened to be a neutral ship in the port, so that he engaged a vessel without much difficulty; but he had barely been out at sea a few hours, when fresh thoughts flashed on his mind, now at leisure for deliberate reflection, and made him alter his course. It was ascertained, from other vessels they fell in with, that no Barbary ships had been seen latterly near the coast, and besides, the very partial plunder of his own mansion, in the midst of many others, made it seem an improbable act to have been committed by the pirates; he ordered the helm, therefore, to be put down, and returned immediately to the shore.

And now a dreadful question began to agitate his mind, which, whether with or without reason, was very afflicting to entertain, for it seemed impossible at the first glance, that any womanly heart could be so obdurately cruel and tigerlike, as wilfully to disjoint the married love of himself and his lady by a deed so atrocious; but when he recalled the stern temper of his mother, and above all her horrible malediction, his heart quite misgave him, and delivered him up to the most dreadful of ideas. It was rumoured, indeed, that Landino had lately been seen in the neighbourhood, and there were other suspicious reports afloat amongst the country people; but these things were very vague and contradictory, and all wanted confirmation.

The miserable Rovinello, with these suspicions in his bosom, repaired instantly to Venice, but the Countess was either guiltless or else dissembled so plausibly, that his thoughts became more bewildering than ever, and, at

length, through grief and anxiety, he fell into a raging fever. His mother attended upon him with the most affectionate assiduity, almost to the removal of his doubts; and especially as she seemed to consider his bereavement with a very moderate but sincere sorrow; whereas, to judge by the common rule, if she had disposed herself of the unhappy Englishwoman, she should have been constant and violent in her expressions of condolence.

In this manner several weeks passed away, Rovinello being very languid from his illness; at last, one day, after being more agitated than common, he desired to take an airing with his mother in her coach, and was observed to be particular in giving instructions to the driver as to his route. The man, attending to his commands with exactness, began to drive very slowly towards a certain spot, and at length stopped immediately in front of those terrible Lion's Heads of the Inquisition, which have heretofore swallowed so many secret denunciations. The Countess

asking with some terror, why he lingered at that spot, "I am come here, mother," he said, "to await the result of a very curious speculation."

With these words, he rivetted his intense eyes upon those of the Countess, who very suddenly turned aside, and called out to the driver to go on; but the man remained still, according to the direction of Rovinello. The latter had now raised his lean hand to the coach window, and pointed to the gaping jaws that received the accusations.

"Mother," said he, pray fix your eye-balls stedfastly upon mine; and now tell me, have you never fed yonder cruel Lions?"

Hereupon, he looked stedfastly upon the eyes of the Countess, which seemed instantly to reel in their sockets, and her cheek turned as pale as ashes. Rovinello, convinced of the guiltiness of his mother by her looks, did not wait for any other confession, but plainly saw his lady, as though through the solid stone walls, in the dreary dungeons of the Inquisition.

In the meantime, his hand had dropped from the window to his cloak, where he had concealed a small pistol, loaded with two balls; and setting the fatal engine against his heart, without another word he discharged it into his bosom, before the very eyes of his unnatural parent.

The servants getting down at the report, ran instantly to the door of the carriage, which was filled with smoke, so that at first they could not perceive the nature of the calamity; at length they discerned the Countess, leaning quite senseless against the back of the coach, her clothes bedabbled with blood, and the body of Rovinello stooping forward upon her knees. It was plain that he was quite dead, wherefore, placing the body upon a kind of litter, some of the people carried it home to the palace. The miserable Countess was driven back to the same place, where she continued for many hours in frantic transports of horror and remorse; and when she became calmer, it was only from her strength being so exhausted that she could

neither rave nor writhe herself any longer. As for the confessor Landino, he was never suffered to abide an instant in her presence, though he made many such attempts,—the mere sight of him throwing the wretched Countess into the most frightful ecstasies.

Some days after the catastrophe of Rovinello, there was a procession through the streets of Venice, which excited a lively interest amongst all classes, being nothing less than the progress of certain wicked heretics to the stake, where they were to be burnt, in order that the Christian spirit might revive, like a Phœnix, out of the human ashes. There had not been a festival of this sort for some time before, so that the people prepared for it with great eagerness, all putting on their holiday clothes, and crowding into the streets, almost to their mutual suffocation; the day being very warm, but otherwise as fine and serene as could be desired for such a ceremony.

The number of the wretched criminals was

nine, of whom there was one woman. Their heads were all shaved, and their feet bare, with fetters round the ankles and wrists of each person. They were dressed in long, yellow penitential robes, painted all over with fiery tongues, or flames, except on the back, where there was a large blood-red cross. Their caps were of the same colours, tall and pointed, in shape somewhat like extinguishers, though not intended for that use, and each of the wretches held in the left hand a lighted taper; though this part of the show was rather dimmed by the brightness of the noontide sun. Certain bare-headed friars walked by the side of the criminals, holding up the cross at every few paces before their melancholy eyes, and exhorting them to suffer patiently, and without any impieties, to which the doleful creatures made answer only by their boisterous lamentations.

There were two of the procession, however, who differed in this particular from the rest, the first of them having become an Atheist, it was

said, since his imprisonment by the Holy Office. This obdurate man marched along erect and silently, without either sigh or groan, to the sacrifice, having first cast his taper in scorn amongst the populace, who would fain have torn him in pieces for this act of contempt, but for the consideration that he was going to make a more adequate expiation.

As for the other person who did not join in the clamorous outcries of the rest, this was a female, young and beautiful, and indeed, the wife of the unfortunate Rovinello, though that circumstance was unknown to the generality of the spectators. Her luxuriant hair had all been cut off, and she wore the same cap and robe of humiliation with the others, but in going barefoot, her tender small white feet were tipped with bloody red, like the morning daisies, through trampling on the rugged flinty-hearted stones. Thus she marched beside the Atheist, not a whit more desponding than he, but with a better hope, looking often upward towards the

merciful skies, which contained the spirit of her beloved Rovinello. The multitude beheld her meekness and devout submission, for so it seemed to them, with great satisfaction, nor did the friars omit to point her out frequently, for the edification of the bystanders.

And now, being come to the appointed spot, which was a convenient open space, the usual preparations were made for the burning. In the middle of the area stood four goodly stakes, which as well as the faggots had been smeared over with pitch and tar, that they might blaze the fiercer. The Chief Inquisitor, with the brethren of the Holy Office, were comfortably seated in front, to overlook the spectacle, and on either side, the court, and the nobility according to their degree; meanwhile the common rabble got such places as they could, some of them even being hoisted up on the shoulders of their fellows. And truly it was a goodly sight to look round on such a noble assemblage, in their robes of state, the very common people having their

holiday suits on, and piety and contentment shining together on every countenance.

After sundry tedious formalities, the abominable Atheist, being the chiefest heretic, was placed foremost, immediately under the eyes of the Grand Inquisitor, who desired nothing so much as the glory of his conversion. The priests of the Holy Office therefore used a thousand arguments to persuade him of his errors; but the desperate man refused to listen to their discourse, replying, when opportunity offered, only by the most scornful expressions. Thus, although there were three friars constantly exhorting him at one time, namely, two Carmelites and a Benedictine, they might as soon have persuaded the north wind to blow southward, as the current of his impiety to take another course.

In order to save him from the guilt of further blasphemies, the Grand Inquisitor made a sign for the faggots (the priests having first duly blessed them) to be heaped around his

feet, hoping by this preparation to terrify him into recantation, whereas the unshrinking heretic looked on with the greatest composure. Observing that he smiled, the Grand Inquisitor demanded the cause of his mirth—for they were near enough to hold a conference together.

"I am thinking," said he, "how yonder bald-pated monks, who are flinching from the heat of the sun, will be able to bear the fiery circles of glory which they promise themselves about their crowns."

At this scoffing answer, his case seeming truly desperate, and his heresy incurable, the fire was ordered to be applied without further delay to the faggots, which kindling up briskly, the scornful countenance of the infidel was soon covered over by a thick cloud of smoke. As soon as the flames reached his flesh, a sharp cry of anguish was heard through the upper vapour, and a priest stepping close in to the

stake, inquired if the criminal yet repented of his damnable errors.

"I called out," said he, "only for a little of your holy water."

The friar, overjoyed at this triumph, stepped back with all haste to get some of the sanctified element, and began to sprinkle him.

"Nay," quoth the relapsing heretic; "I meant it only to be bestowed on these scorching faggots."

At this fresh contempt the wood was stirred briskly up again, and sent forth redoubled volumes of fire and smoke, so that it was evident he would soon be consumed. The flames lapping him quickly all round, and driving the smoke into the upper region, the burning figure could plainly be distinguished in the midst, now thoroughly dead, the wretched man having been stifled in the beginning of the fire. Notwithstanding, on a sudden there was a loud shout from the people, "He

is praying! He is praying!" and, lo! the scorched black carcase was seen plainly to lift its clasped hands towards the skies. Now the case was this, that the cords which confined his arms being burnt asunder by chance, before those which bound his wrists, his arms by the contraction of the sinews were drawn upwards, in the manner I have described—however, the multitude fancied quite otherwise, and the Atheist is affirmed to have become a convert to this very day.

A couple of wicked perverse Jews having been disposed of in the like way, (the rest of the criminals, save the female, being recusants who had been brought to the stake only for the sake of example)—there remained but the young Englishwoman to be dealt with. During the burning of the others, she had remained tied to the stake with the faggots about her feet, and the confessor Landino by her side, who promised himself much glory from her conversion, whereas she never condescended to

listen to his harangues, but with eyes turned upward, and her mind absent, and in a better place, continued her secret prayers with much fortitude and devotion. The dreadful fire-brand, which was made of three torches twisted into one, to typify the holy mystery, being brought in readiness to kindle the fire, Landino besought her to consider whether her tender body could endure such torments.

"By the help of God," she replied, "I will. The smoke of your last offering is already in the skies, and my spirit is fain to follow."

The Grand Inquisitor hearing this answer, delivered with such a resolute tone and look, made a sign to Landino to let him speak.

"Miserable child!" he cried, "do you believe that the souls of heretics enjoy, at the very first, that blessed ascension? Wretched, wretched creature, you will learn otherwise in purgatory!"—and he made a sign for the torch to be thrust into the pile.

"At least," interrupted Landino, "at least

confess the tender mercy of the holy church thou contemnest, who thus, by this charitable purgation of thy body, redeems thy soul from everlasting perdition; by these flames temporary, absolves thee from flames eternal."

"My parents," replied the lady very meekly, "were both Protestants; and it seems most becoming, at this last hour of my life, to continue in that faith whereunto they bred me. As for your flaming charity, I pray God that it may not be repaid to you in kind, at the great day of judgment;" with which answer she closed her eyes, and set herself stedfastly as if she would hear no more speeches.

The Confessor Landino, who heretofore had been unable to make any impression on her firmness, hereupon gave up all hope of prevailing over her quiet but constant spirit; but as for the Grand Inquisitor, he was quite beyond his patience. "Let her be burned!" he cried; which command was performed without delay.

At the first sharp pang of the cruel flames, a

sudden flush, as though of red-hot blood, mounted up into the marble cheeks of the unfortunate lady, and she drew her breath inwards with a very long shuddering sigh. The reflection of the increasing fire soon cast the same ruddy hue on the countenances of all the spectators, for the flames climbed with merciful rapidity up her loose feminine garments. Those who were nearest saw her head drop suddenly, as she choked upon her bosom; and then the cords burning through and through, the whole lifeless body tumbled forward into the embers, causing a considerable flutter of dust and smoke; and when it cleared away, there was nothing to be seen but a confused heap of ashes and dying embers.

Thus perished that lovely, unhappy English gentlewoman, in her prime of youth, far away from all that regarded her with love, and with few that looked on her with any degree of pity. And now the people were about to depart with mutual congratulations, when suddenly there

arose a great bustle towards the quarter of the Grand Inquisitor, and in a few moments the Countess Rovinello, in deep mourning, was seen kneeling at his feet. Her face was quite haggard and dreadful to look upon, and her dress so disordered as to make her seem like a maniac, but her gestures were still more frantic-like. Whatever her suit might be, the Inquisitor seemed much ruffled, and got up to depart; but she seized hold of his gown and detained him, whilst she continued to plead with great earnestness.

"You are too late!" he said, and withal he pointed his wand of office to the heap of black ashes that stood before him.

The Countess, letting go her hold, went and gazed for a minute on the cinders; then stooping down and gathering up a handful of the dust, she returned, and before he was aware, strewed some on the head of the Inquisitor, and the remainder upon her own.

" Let these ashes," she said, " be in token of our everlasting repentance."

After this awful ceremony,—neither of them without signs of remorse in their countenances, —they separated to console themselves as they might for their parts in this melancholy tragedy.

A TALE OF THE HAREM.

Imprison'd songster, my unhappy fate
Is, like thy own, disconsolate;
Thou art a prisoner, I a prisoner too,
Thou singest, and I sing.

SPANISH ROMANCES.

A Tale of the Harem.

Vol. 2.

Designed & Drawn on Stone by T. Dighton.

Printed by C. Hullmandel.

A TALE OF THE HAREM.

In the maritime warfare between the Genoese and the Turks, though the Mussulmen were worsted in nine battles out of ten, it happened sometimes that one or two galleys of our own were taken by the Infidels; and through one of these mishaps an Italian gentleman named Benetto, who was a singing-master, and on his passage to England, became a captive to the enemy. Being a very resolute man, he fought till there were more slashes in his clothes than had been fashioned by the tailor; but the crew being mastered by a superior force, the musician was put in chains on board of the Turkish ship. The latter having been

well mauled in the engagement, with many iron pellets sticking in her sides, and her tackling in a state of great disorder, made all the sail she could into port, where the captives were disposed of as slaves to the highest bidder.

Now it chanced luckily for Benetto, that he was purchased by an agent of the Sultan of Constantinople, and sent to work as an assistant in the gardens of the Seraglio; whereas others, being bought by avaricious people, underwent a variety of changes, passing from one master to another, but without any difference for the better in their condition. The fortunate Benetto, on the contrary, led an easy life enough, having only to tend upon the flowers and shrubs for the gratification of the ladies of the Harem; and what proved a great comfort to him was, that he had no mistress to mourn for in a distant country; so that though he sighed sometimes for liberty, he never gave himself up to despondency like the rest of the captives.

Thus he continued to dig, and water the

plants very contentedly, as though he had been born for that task, being a man of that happy cheerful disposition which can accommodate itself to any circumstances; and besides, the superintendent of the pleasure-grounds was of as pleasant a humour as himself, which tended very materially to his ease. And truly it was well that Benetto kept up a better heart than the captive Jews in Babylon; for he had by nature a melodious voice, improved by art to great perfection, the science of music having been his peculiar study; and oftentimes he beguiled himself after his day's work by singing over his most favourite airs.

The apartment of the ladies of the Harem stood, luckily, at such a convenient distance, that Benetto's voice found its way through the windows, which were sure to be left open every night, for the sake of the warbling of the nightingales that harboured amongst the trees. The discourse of the ladies turning one evening on the ravishing notes of that bird, and its

amours with the rose, there came a deep sigh from the bosom of one of the Sultanas, a Circassian, and she affirmed that there was a voice more enchanting than that which had been so much commended.

"As for the bird it belongs to," she said, "to judge from his tune, he must be of a most delicate figure and plumage; for though I cannot make out a single word, there seems a most passionate meaning in whatever he sings."

At this speech, one of the ladies burst into tears, and leaned down her beautiful face between her hands; for she was an Italian by birth, and remembered well the sweet languishing and love-breathing ditties of her native land; the rest of the women crowding about her at these symptoms of emotions, and inquiring the reason,——

"Alas!" she sobbed, "the songs that you hear come from no bird, but from a human voice, which belongs to some unfortunate cap-

tive from my own dear country beyond the sea. I wonder not that you found it so touching, for that kind of melody belongs naturally to our clime. The songs there are so full of love and tenderness, that the amorous rose, instead of merely opening her bosom as she does to the song of the bulbul, would put forth wings in place of leaves, to fly after the musician."

Nor did the fond lady speak beyond her feeling in this matter, so dearly does memory exaggerate the merits of things beloved. Anon the clear voice of Benetto sounded again upon the distant wind; and when it was silent, the mournful lady responded with a canzonet so exquisitely pathetic, that the listeners, though they did not comprehend even one syllable of the words, were melted instantly into tears. The singer herself, coming at last to a certain passage, which seemed to cause the very breaking of her heartstrings, was so overcome, that she could proceed no farther; but, with a throat

swelling with grief instead of harmony, cast herself upon a sofa, and gave way to an ecstasy of tears.

In the mean time Benetto, hearing the voice in the garden, had drawn near to the window, and recognized the song to be one of the compositions of Italy, which set his heart aching more seriously than ever since he had been a captive. However, he soon plucked up his spirits; and congratulating himself that there was one person at least in Constantinople to take part with him in a duett, he concerned himself only to contrive how to get admitted to the concert.

Accordingly, choosing the best of his pieces, he sang them in the garden every night with the tenderest expression, the ladies being always confined after dusk within the palace. At last, the Sultan happening to hear his music, had a mind to enjoy it nearer; so, sending a slave to fetch the gardener into an ante-chamber,

which was separated from that of the ladies only by a silken curtain, Benetto was commanded to sing some of his best songs. As he executed them in very excellent style, the Sultan, who had a good ear enough for an infidel, was exceedingly pleased with the performance. Commending the musician, therefore, in very gracious terms to Angelina, for that was the name of the Italian lady, she made bold to answer him as follows.

"Sire, I agree with your Majesty, that the slave has a sweet voice, and an agreeable style of singing; notwithstanding, there are several of the airs, and especially one piece, which, as far as I remember of the music, are capable of much tenderer expression. By your Majesty's leave, if I might hear that song once or twice over, I think I could remember the variations, which I think would afford your Majesty an increase of pleasure."

The Sultan, who was passionately fond of

her voice, immediately commanded Benetto to sing over again the last song, and which was an air capable of very melancholy cadences. Now Angelina was an improvisatrice, and could compose verses at pleasure, so when it came to her turn to sing, she set extempore words in Italian to the music, which spoke to the following effect:—

"Ah, Florence! fair Florence! city of my heart, shall I never behold thee again?

"There are marble walls between us, and gates of brass—but my thoughts go wandering up and down thy familiar streets!

"Methinks I see my beloved home, with the very flowers that I left growing upon the terrace!

"Methinks I see thee, gentle Arno, shining merrily in the sun!

"Alas! my tears wash out this dream, like the colours on a cloud full of rain.

"I look again; and behold, there is nothing left but my prison wall!"

When she had done singing, Benetto, taking the hint, replied in the same manner, but with less eloquence; telling her, in plain language, to keep up her heart, and that by God's help she should one day see Florence again. The concert being then ended, he was dismissed, with a piece of gold as a mark of the approbation of the Sultan.

The next day, when the superintendent of the pleasure-grounds was walking about the royal gardens, Benetto came up to him and asked for a saw, in order to cut down a certain noxious tree. The superintendent desiring to know which it was, Benetto pointed out a particular tree, with a number of horizontal branches growing very closely together, but the

Turk would by no means suffer it to be cut down. It was of so rare a kind, he said, that he did not know even its name; but Benetto, who had his wits about him, and knew that there was no other tree in the garden so likely for his purpose, did not give up the matter without another trial.

Accordingly, taking care never to bestow any water upon the plants within a certain distance of the tree, there being at the same time a long drought, they soon sickened and withered up; whereupon leading the superintendent to the spot, he pointed out this effect.

"This baneful tree," said he, "of the name of which you are so ignorant, is without question the deadly Upas of the island of Java, which is of so poisonous a quality, that it will not suffer any vegetable to grow under the shadow of its branches. Look how the herbs round it have all perished, as if they had been scorched up with fire; and, as I have read, the human life is quite as liable to be affected by its pernicious

atmosphere. Thus, if any of the ladies of the Harem should by chance fall asleep under it, I doubt it would be as fatal as the Tree of Knowledge to their grandmother. We might as well chew the deadly leaves, as that anything of this kind should happen; for our death would be as certain in one case as in the other. For my own part, though the least splinter of this cursed wood is mortal if it should enter into the flesh, I will cheerfully undertake the hazard of cutting down this dangerous trunk, rather than have such a dreadful responsibility hanging continually over my head."

The good-natured superintendent agreeing with the prudence of this recommendation, Benetto got permission to cut down the tree as fast as he would, which he did not fail to perform; and after lopping away all the branches on two sides of the stem, in the manner of an espalier, he set down the tree carelessly in a bye-corner of the garden.

The same evening Benetto was sent for as

before, to sing in the ante-chamber; and beginning with the same melancholy air, there came a voice suddenly through the silken screen, commanding him to desist.

"I have been thinking," said the Sultan, as he turned to Angelina, who was sitting beside him on a sofa in the inner room; "I have been thinking that I should like now to hear some lively tune: the songs I have heard hitherto, though very beautiful, were all of a melancholy cast; and I am curious to know whether the genius of your music will admit also of comical expression."

"I can assure your Highness," said the lady, "there is no country that can boast of such pretty little laughing canzonets as my own, for though we have borrowed many strains from the nightingale, we have others that warble as merrily as the carol of the morning lark.

"You make me impatient to hear one," replied the Sultan; whereupon an attendant was

sent to convey this command to Benetto, who immediately struck up a very lively tune; and, as he had good news to communicate, he sang with unbounded gaiety and spirit. The words ran thus:—

"Ladders there are none in this place, neither of ropes nor of wood!

"But I have a pretty tree, with many branches, that will stand upright against a wall!

"What if I should place it against a lady's prison, in the middle of the night?

"Shall I see a vision, like Jacob, of a figure stepping down my ladder, who looks like an angel of light?"

The lady, being overjoyed at these welcome tidings, sang with an equal glee, and made answer by the same tune in a similar way.

"O joy of joys!—To hear this grateful news, there seems now but a mile, paved with wishes, between Florence and me.

"I feel myself already, like a bird with wings, amongst those pleasant boughs!

"Step by step, as I descend, I pluck the sweet apples of liberty, which relish even as the fruits of my own dear land!"

It happened that the piece they had been singing had a pretty little burthen at the end for two voices; so that when the lady came to that part, Benetto joined in with the proper chorus of the song, to the great admiration of the Sultan, who ordered him a piece of gold on his dismissal, which seemed to make the captive defer his plot for another night.

On the following day, about noon, when the superintendent as usual came into the gardens, he was amazed to see Benetto working

at a parterre with an extraordinary kind of hoe, the handle of which, rudely fashioned and rough, could not be less than a dozen feet long. The jolly Turk, tucking his hands in his sash, fell to laughing immoderately at this whimsical sight, for Benetto wielded his implement with considerable awkwardness; at last, fetching his breath again, he inquired the reason of such an extraordinary appearance.

Benetto, without turning his head aside, answered very sedately, that it was the universal custom of his country to use hoes with handles of that length.

"Now God forgive me!" answered the Mussulman; "but you have made me long to travel, since there are such wonderful scenes to be enjoyed abroad:" and with that he fell into a fresh convulsion of laughter.

In the mean time Benetto continued his work with inflexible gravity, though the exertion he used to handle the hoe with dexterity made the sweat-drops start out like great beads

upon his forehead. At last, being fain to obtain a pause, he explained to the Turk, who had done laughing, that it was common in Italy to employ those long-handled hoes, in order to reach the weeds in the middle of a parterre without trampling amongst the plants.

"There is some reason in what you say," returned the superintendent; and taking the tool out of the hand of Benetto, he made aim at certain weeds in the middle of the bed; but at the very first stroke he mowed down a whole cluster of flowers.

Thereupon bursting into a fresh fit of mirth at his own clumsiness, the merry Turk thrust the wonderful hoe back again into the hand of the gardener, who resumed his labour with great earnestness; the Mussulman in the meanwhile walking away, but often turning his head over his shoulder to look back at Benetto, who, as soon as the old fellow had gone out of sight, laid down the ponderous hoe with very

great good will, and began to chuckle in his turn.

When the hour for music was come, he was summoned again to the antechamber, where he had the boldness, whilst he waited, to steal a peep through a crevice of the silken curtain, and discovered that his countrywoman was quite as beautiful a person as his fancy had suggested. He had taken care to compose some fresh words for the occasion, as well as to set them to another air, which he had not sung on any of the preceding nights: it had also a part for two voices, which the lady happened to know, and the Sultan was so delighted with the liveliness of the music, that he made them sing it to him several times over. At last, just as they were commencing the chorus for the fourth time, his face very suddenly altered, from the greatest pleasure to a look of gloom; and he turned his brows with such a frown upon the lady, that she stopped short in the middle of a note.

" How is this ?" said he : " I understand nothing of the language, but I can perceive that you sing different words to the music every time that it is repeated."

Angelina blushed and hung down her head at this abrupt question, for she could invent verses with far more facility than excuses. At last she told him, that it was usual in Italy to leave the words of such airy little songs to the fancy of the singers, and that, except when those happened to be persons of wit and genius, the verses were always composed of the most common-place expressions.

The Sultan listened to this explanation with a very grave look, and after meditating a while, spoke thus: " Madam, you must not take it ill of me, but hereafter I shall desire the Dragoman (or Interpreter) to partake with me in the delight of hearing you. He is as fond of music as I am, and will be able to satisfy me whether the poetry of what you sing is answerable, in sentiment, to the music.

The lady and Benetto both suspected, from these expressions, that the Sultan entertained some mistrust of them; and therefore, when they sang again, it was with some quaverings which did not belong to the composition. The Sultan at length signifying that he had heard enough, the singers desisted, and Benetto was dismissed, for this once, without any piece of gold, the Sultan intending secretly to reward him on the morrow with two hundred stripes of the bastinado.

As soon as Benetto found his opportunity, he repaired therefore to the garden, convinced that it was time to put his design into execution. The skies fortunately were full of clouds, making the night very obscure, except at some intervals, when the moon broke through the vapours; so that he set about his work in the gloom with the greater confidence. Having learned at least the art of transplanting during his service in the gardens, his first step

was to convey the tree, which has been already mentioned, towards the apartment of Angelina.

Now, her chamber opened upon a long gallery or balcony on the outside of the harem, against which Benetto rested the tree as securely as he could: nor was this an easy performance, for it was as heavy as he could well carry, so that his joints even cracked beneath the weight. After resting awhile to regain his breath, he began to mount up his extempore ladder; and as the branches were very close together, the ascent was quite an easy affair. Thus, he was able to look in at the lady's window in a very few seconds; but, alas! though he had not wasted a minute that could be saved, he was already too late, as will presently appear.

It is a barbarous custom with the Turks, when they conceive any jealousy or disgust of their mistresses, to tie them up in sacks and cast them into the water; the sea, which is the object

of marriage with the Venetian Doges, being to the Ottoman Sultans the instrument of divorce. As soon, then, as Benetto looked in at the window, his eyes were shocked by the sight of three black savage-looking slaves, who were preparing for this cruel ceremony, the victim being no other than his own unfortunate countrywoman. Her mouth having been gagged beforehand, she could not utter any cries; but with her hands she made the most piteous supplications to the cruel Moors, two of whom held the mouth of the gaping sack wide open, whilst the other with his rude profane hands endeavoured by force to bind her delicate limbs.

The terrified Benetto, who comprehended this scene at the first peep, felt such a shock as a sleeper who oversteps a precipice in his dream. A sudden swimming in his head made him ready to tumble off the tree; but luckily his body was leaning against the rail-work of the gallery, so that he could not fall: in the meantime he was quite exposed to view from the window, but

the blacks were so thoroughly employed, thatthey had not time to cast a look that way. After a minute or two, resuming his presence of mind, he bent down his body so as to be concealed behind the gallery, and in this uneasy posture deliberated within himself how he ought to proceed. His first impulse was to rush in upon the ruffianly slaves; but recollecting that he had no weapon, and that such an assault could but delay the fate of the lady for a few moments, he resolved on a more prudent course.

Taking down his ladder, therefore, which now seemed twice as burthensome as before, and his heart a great deal heavier, he set up the tree against the wall of the garden, on the side next the water, whose murmurings through the stillness of the night he could sufficiently distinguish.

It took him but a few moments to clamber to the top of the wall, by the help of the friendly tree; which, however, was too cumbersome to be dragged up after him in order to effect a

descent on the other side. In nine cases out of ten, this would have been the natural oversight of a man intent upon the first step of his escape; whereas the ingenious Benetto had foreseen and provided against this difficulty. In a few minutes, therefore, he was safely landed on the other side; and, without doubt, the superintendent, who ridiculed the gardener's long hoe, would have changed his tone to see it hanging on the outer part of the wall, for the accommodation of Benetto; for by this means he let himself down with ease, the handle reaching within a few yards of the ground.

And now the moon, breaking away through a sullen cloud, behind the chinks of which she had sometimes just glimmered like a bright fish entangled in a net, began to touch every object as with a silver wand: Benetto found it necessary, therefore, to shelter himself, like a man who shunned his own shadow, by going into the obscurest places, creeping on in this manner from tree to tree and from wall to wall,

till he reached the water-side: but in what direction he should next proceed, in order to intercept the lady, was a question that got no better answer than those which are addressed to the echo.

Whilst he was thus wandering, the three black slaves, having tied up the unfortunate lady in the sack, proceeded with their burthen, as they were directed, towards a lonely place on the banks of the Bosphorus, in order to bestow her in her last bath with the greater privacy. Now it happened, through the goodness of God, that there was an English ship of war then lying off at anchor, having brought over an ambassador to the Sublime Porte; and some of the sailors and junior officers, desiring a frolic, had put off secretly in the ship's boat, and landed about the same spot.

These jovial men wandering about the shore, it fell out that they encountered with the blacks; and being minded to joke with them, some of the sailors enquired by signs what they carried

in that poke. The slaves, not caring to disclose the truth, made answer that it was some rotten wheat which they were going to cast into the sea; and with that, they endeavoured to get away, not caring to have to do with drunkards, for the mariners rolled about a good deal, as they are apt to do on the dry land. Now the lady, who, though gagged, had yet the use of her ears, had overheard the question of the sailors; and whilst the slaves were answering, she began to wriggle herself about in the sack as violently as she could. The sailor who stood nearest, observing this motion, did not fail to notice it to his comrades, and they became speedily as curious as himself to ascertain what it was that struggled so in the sack. The blacks however, who relished them very little, still endeavoured to break away, whereas the strangers were equally bent upon their own satisfaction, so that the parties came in a little while to blows. The sturdy seamen prevailing, and getting possession of the sack, they

soon discovered, with great indignation, the nature of its contents; whereupon the cowardly blacks, not waiting for the buffets which they were certain to receive, took instantly to their heels, and were out of sight in a minute.

The English sailors, who can melt upon a proper occasion as readily as their own pitch and tar, were infinitely concerned at the condition of the poor lady; wherefore, after releasing her limbs, as well as her tongue, which was not backward in thanks to her deliverers, they rowed back with all diligence to the ship, where Angelina was treated with every kind of tenderness and attention.

The discomfited blacks in the interim had got under the shadow of a high wall, where they sat down to take breath; and after weeping together for a while, they all opened their mouths at once with the same question, to ask what was to be done.

"For my part," said one, "I am not weeping thus merely because the lady has escaped, for

we could easily devise a lie together and declare that the job was done. But, alas! I know that the chief of the eunuchs, old Abdalla, is so careful, that he will be waiting for us at the ducking place, to see with his own eyes that she is thrown in."

The slaves, knowing this to be the most likely case, began to shed tears again, and howled in a low tone very dismally, for they felt that their heads were only fastened by a pack-thread to their shoulders. At last, Mezrou, who was the eldest, spoke as follows:—

"Our case," said he, "is indeed critical—so that my neck smarts already to think of the result. On the one hand, if we tell any lie, there is that accursed old chief of the eunuchs to detect us; and on the other, if we confess the simple truth, our heads will still fly off, because we did not fight with those sea-devils to the last extremity. I see therefore but one way to escape out of this scrape, which is, by putting some trick upon Abdalla. And now

I think of it, there is a certain Frank lives hereabouts, who keeps a great sow pig in his back-yard; and at the next house there is a baker, where we may obtain a sack. Now, if the swine were tied up fitly, and her head well muffled in my sash, so as to keep her from either grunting or squealing, I think the deception might pass; but it must be dispatched very quickly."

The other slaves thinking favourably of this scheme, they ran off together to the house of the baker, who was in bed; but they obliged him to get up and give them an empty flour sack; after which, going to the pigsty of the Frank, they secured his sow in the sack, with a little difficulty. Then taking up the burthen between them, which was full as lively as the other had been, they trotted gaily down to the water-side, where they soon perceived some person pacing to and fro, whom they took at the first glance for Abdalla. Going straight up to him therefore, without any mistrust, they

all called out together, that they had brought the lady to be drowned, which was agreeable news enough to the man, for in truth it was no other than Benetto, who had been wandering up and down the shore, in the greatest uncertainty and despair.

The words, then, had no sooner got clear of the thick foolish lips of the blacks, than the musician began to deal about him so roundly, that the foremost was laid sprawling in a twinkling upon the earth. The other two, at this sight, foreseeing that they should have use for all the hands they had, immediately pitched down the sack with very little ceremony; and any one may conceive how this action increased the fury of Benetto.

The battered swine resenting the outrage as much, and feeling herself more at liberty, began at the same moment to struggle vehemently within the sack, so that she partly released her nostrils from the sash, and began to call out with all her brutal breath for liberty.

Thus the rage of Benetto, whenever he began to faint, was roused up again by these half-stifled cries; which, struggling partly through the canvass and the linen, were equivocal enough to be mistaken for the voice of Angelina, even by the ear of a musician. These excitements lending him treble courage and vigour, he was quite a match for the three slaves together, notwithstanding they fought lustily; and doubtless something tragical would have ensued but for the thriftiness of the baker.

This careful man, grudging to lend a new sack to strangers, had picked out an old one, the canvass of which was very rotten and full of patches; so that as Benetto glanced his eyes every now and then towards the sack, to give himself fresh encouragement, on a sudden the cloth ripped up with a smart report, and the huge sow, jumping briskly out, went cantering off homewards, with the sash round her head, and grunting all the way to denote her satisfaction.

The blacks, through this accident, having nothing to contend for, gave over the contest; and after a little grinning scampered away after the pig, to make up what story they could to the chief of the eunuchs.

As for Benetto, he stood as if rooted to the spot, and stared on the remains of the sack like one who had just witnessed some great stroke of enchantment. No sight, in truth, could have caused him such an astonishment, unless, indeed, the spectacle of a sow turning before his eyes into a lady, for he had made certain of Angelina being within the sack, even to the seeing of her, in fancy, through her veil of canvass. At last, coming to his senses, and catching sight of the English vessel, his thoughts began to turn upon his own safety; and stripping off his jacket and turban, he began to swim towards the ship, though with great difficulty, on account of his bruises.

It would not be easy to describe his transports, when he came on board and discovered

Angelina: wherefore, let that topic be left untouched, as well as the mirth which prevailed at the relation of his adventures. The ship setting sail immediately for England, after a prosperous passage the two happy Italians disembarked at London, where Benetto, by his skill in music and excellent singing, acquired an immense fortune in a very few years. In the meantime he espoused Angelina, and finally returned with her to Florence, where they lived for many years in great happiness and very merrily; for neither of them could ever smell pork, or pass by a hogsty, without an inclination to laughter.

As for the three black slaves, they wore their heads some years longer than they expected; the lie they made up being credited by Abdalla, the chief of the eunuchs, who had never stirred out from the palace. The superintendent of the pleasure-grounds was however more unlucky, for he suffered some hundred stripes of the bastinado on the soles of his feet,

for allowing the innovations of Benetto. In consequence, there are no more upas-trees to be found in the royal gardens; and the slaves labour, even unto this very day, with hoes that are but a yard long in the handle.

THE CHESTNUT TREE.

Like a demigod here sit I in the sky,
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

THE CHESTNUT TREE.

It is a deplorable custom with spendthrifts, when their purses are empty, to replenish them at the cost of the dryads, often cutting down the very trees that have sheltered the most venerable of their ancestors, as well as the timber which wants many years of its proper growth, according to the pressure of their wants. Many foolish persons, again, under false pretences of taste, will root up the sheltering woods and copses, that made comfortable fences against the inclement wind, thus letting in the unmitigated tempest to rage against their bleak naked mansions; both parties being equally

mischievous in their way. There are other persons, however, who cut down their oaks, and chestnuts, for much better reasons, as you shall presently hear.

A certain Hidalgo was walking in a lonely plain, in the neighbourhood of Granada, when he was suddenly attacked by a small wild Spanish bull. The spiteful creature, with red sparkling eyes, and a body as black as any coal, made a run at the gentleman so nimbly, that he had barely time to save himself by climbing up a large chestnut-tree; whereupon the wicked beast began to toss about the loose earth with great fury, instead of the human clay he had intended to trifle with.

There is no such creature in the world as your bull for a revengeful memory, for he will cherish affronts or dislikes for a considerable while; and besides, he takes great pleasure in any premeditated mischief, which he will pursue with a vast deal of patience. Thus, whenever the Hidalgo set his foot upon the ground, the

wily animal, who had kept at a convenient distance, immediately ran at him again, so that he was forced to betake himself to the tree with the utmost alacrity. Then the bull would stray farther off, still keeping a wary eye towards the tree; but feeding in the meantime so quietly, that every thought of malice seemed to have quite gone out of his round roguish head; whereas he was ready at a twinkling for a fresh career, his perseverance excelling that of grimalkin, when she sits watching at a mouse's street-door.

The impatient Hidalgo, weary at heart of this game, where all his moves tended to no purpose, at last gave up the point, and removed higher up in the tree, in order to amuse himself with the surrounding prospect, which was now enlivened by the oblique rays of the declining sun. I will wait, said he, till night makes a diversion in my favour, and, like the matadore, hangs her cloak on this wild devil's horns; so turning himself about, from side

to side, he began to contemplate the various objects in the distance.

Whilst he was thus occupied, with his eyes turned towards the East, there came two men on foot from the opposite quarter, who, passing beyond the tree, approached the browzing bull without any kind of mistrust. The dissembling creature allowed them to come pretty near, without any suspicion; and then suddenly charging at the two men, they were obliged to run to the tree as the only shelter, and with great difficulty clambered out of reach of his mischievous horns. The animal, being thus foiled for the second time, revenged himself on the hat of one of the travellers, which had been dropped in the race, and then began to feed again at the usual distance.

The two pedlars, for so they seemed, made several attempts, like the Hidalgo, to get away, but the bull still intercepted them in the same manner; so that at last they were fain to dispose themselves as comfortably as they could

on a lower branch, and await the pleasure of the animal, to proceed on their way. The Hidalgo being a shy, reserved man by nature, as well as very haughty on account of his nation and his birth, did not choose to make any advances towards his fellow-lodgers in the tree, who by their dress were people of the common sort. The two men, on their part, knew nothing of a third person being perched above their heads; wherefore, to pass away the time, they began to talk over their affairs together, with as much confidence as if they had been sitting in the middle of the great Arabian Desert.

At first the Hidalgo, being much occupied by his own reflections, did not listen very attentively to their discourse; besides, he had a great contempt for the conversation of such vulgar persons, which would have prevailed over any common curiosity; however, as some sentences reached him against his will, he happened to overhear a name passing between them that made him prick up his ears.

"I am afraid, Gines Spinello," said one of the voices, "that this cursed creature will spoil our sport for to-night."

Now it was no wonder that the gentleman became so much interested in their conversation, for the fellow just mentioned was a notorious robber, and the terror of the whole province. The Hidalgo, therefore, felt a natural curiosity to behold so remarkable a character; and peeping down very cautiously between the leaves, he saw the two men sitting astride, with their faces towards each other, on the lowermost bough. They were so much below him, that he could not judge of their physiognomies; but of course the very hair of their heads seemed, to his fancy, to partake of a very ruffianly expression.

"As for that matter," returned Spinello, "our job to-night is a trifling one that may be dispatched in two hours. What frets me more is to be obliged to sit thus, cock-horse, upon a cursed branch; for I have always a misgiving at

getting up into a tree, since nothing has proved so fatal to several of our gang."

The other, laughing heartily at these expressions, which he supposed to allude to the gallows, Gines interrupted him in a very grave tone.

"I mean no such matter," said he, "as you conclude. The gibbet indeed has made an end of some of us; but the trees I mean, were as much growing and flourishing as this. It was a chestnut too, that cost so dear to poor Lazarillo; wherefore, I would rather that this tree had been a cypress, or a yew even, or of some other kind."

"For my part, chestnut or not," said the other, "I feel myself much beholden to this good plant: notwithstanding, I should like to hear what happened to Lazarillo, and the others of the gang."

The Hidalgo by this time was quite as much interested in the mishap of Lazarillo: so laying himself along the bough, and grasping it with

both his arms, he stooped his head sideways as low as he could, to listen to the story that Gines was going to relate.

"You are aware," said Spinello, "that when we have no affair of moment upon our hands, which requires us to go in company, it is usual for some of the cleverest amongst us to go abroad singly, on little adventures of their own. Thus it befel Lazarillo to take it in his head to pay a visit to a certain Hidalgo, who resides not a long way from this spot. There was a clump of chestnut trees in front of the house, all of them of wonderful bulk, having stood there a great many years, and it was the season when they were in full leaf. Lazarillo, coming a little too soon, and seeing a great many lights in the windows, clambered up into the greatest of these trees, which stood nearest to the house, in order to hide himself till dark, as well as to observe what was going on within the house. The boughs being very broad and smooth, he found his nest comfortable enough; and, besides, he was

very well diverted to watch the motions of the servants, for some of the branches grew against the chamber windows, so that he could even see how the people bestowed the plate and valuables against the night. Whilst he was amusing himself in this way, the Hidalgo, who had been out sporting, came homewards with his fowling-piece in his hand; when just at this nick there flew up some large kind of bird, and made off directly for the tree."

"Well, wherefore do you stop?" asked the other rogue very eagerly, for at these words Gines had made a tolerable long pause.

"I was thinking," said Gines, "that I heard a rustling overhead; but it was only some breeze amongst the leaves. I suppose the Hidalgo was willing to discharge his gun before he entered the house, for it was loaded with very large shot, which are never used to kill birds with; however, he fired after the fowl into the very middle of the leaves, and the devil guiding the lead, some of it went into the

body of poor Lazarillo, who tumbled in a trice to the ground. If the shot had not killed him, the fall would have broken his neck, so that he was stone-dead upon the spot: however, to make sure of that matter, our governors made a point of hanging him afterwards upon another tree."

Herewith Gines vented a thousand horrible imprecations against the unfortunate sportsman; who had the evil luck to be sitting at that very moment above his head. The unhappy Hidalgo, though he was miserably terrified, dared not even to quake—the least motion causing a rustling amongst the leaves, or a creaking of the bough; and getting cramped, as any one must, to ride so long on a wooden chestnut horse, without a saddle, yet he could not venture to stretch a limb to relieve himself. In the mean time, fear caused such a boiling noise in his ears, as if of the devil's cauldron at a gallop, that he could not make out the history of the other robbers who had perished by means of

the trees. The two rogues, on the contrary, finding themselves very much at their ease, continued to gossip together with great coolness, though the bull had now removed to a considerable distance. The Hidalgo, at last, resuming the use of his faculties, overheard as follows:—

"As for the chestnut trees," said Gines, "you will see the stumps of them to-night, for the Hidalgo did not choose to leave a perch for any more such birds so near his house. But there are other ways to know what goes on within, as well as by looking through the windows; and we shall soon see whether the people of this random shooter are more properly his servants or my own."

At this insinuation, the wretched person who sat aloft could not help uttering a half-stifled groan, which would have infallibly betrayed him, if it had not passed for the grumbling of the bull. Notwithstanding, he had to endure still worse tidings; to conceive which, suppose

Gines to describe the abominable plot he had laid for the murder of the Hidalgo—two of his servants being in the pay of the banditti, and engaged to admit them in the middle of the night. The rogues did not omit, moreover, to dispose of the two daughters of the unfortunate gentleman overhead; and as their inclinations pointed differently, the one choosing the youngest, and the other the elder lady for a mistress, they soon came to an amicable understanding on this part of the design. Thus the Hidalgo, who had always intended to match his children as he would, without question even of the girls themselves, was obliged to hear them disposed of beforehand, and without having any voice whatever in the affair.

The encroaching dusk closing round, in the meantime, till the horizon was confined within a very narrow circle, the two villains at last dismounted from the bough, and proceeded on their way without any interruption from the bull, who was now scarcely visible, amid the

distant shadows. As soon as the rogues were out of sight, the Hidalgo scrambled down the trunk, to the infinite relief of his limbs, which from long confinement to the same posture had grown as rigid and almost as crooked as the boughs they had embraced: however, the thought of what was to take place at home soon enforced a suppleness in his joints, and he departed with a brisk shuffling pace, from what had been to him such a very bitter tree of knowledge.

The dreadful fear which had lately possessed his bosom, turning, now that he was in safety, to the most revengeful feelings, he vowed as he went along, that Gines and his gang should suffer in retaliation by the most exquisite torments. In this furious mood, with clenched hands and teeth, and terrible emphatic steps, he entered his own house, and repaired straight into the apartment of his daughters; who, seeing the flaming beacons of wrath in his countenance, were ready to swoon with dismay. It alarmed

them the more, that they had not expected him to return for the night, and being ignorant of the true occasion, they were led, by certain misgivings of their own hearts, to impute his anger to a very different cause, wherefore coming together with clasped hands, to kneel down at his feet, they besought him with many tears to be moe calm and temperate.

At another time, this strange conduct would have astounded the Hidalgo, whereas, having other concerns in his mind, he did not stop to sift out the mystery, but, in as few words as he could, explained the danger that was hanging over their heads: The two terrified maidens, at this horrible report, instantly forgot all other fears, for the mere words conjured up the figures of the banditti upon the vacant air; but when the Hidalgo came to speak of the design of the robber and his comrade, how they were to make mistresses of the two ladies, they sent up together, as if from one throat, a shrill involuntary scream. Anon, running hastily to

different closets, for the greater danger always swallows up the less in this manner, they dragged forward a brace of young comely gallants, who, on their part, seemed ready enough to protect them from Gines and his associates.

The two champions, as well as the Hidalgo, were somewhat disconcerted by his abrupt introduction to each other, and the pale lily of fear that had blown on the cheeks of the damsels, was burned up by a deep crimson blush. At last one of the cavaliers, addressing himself to the Hidalgo, began to speak for both after this manner:—

"Sir, I know that you cannot behold us with any welcome; and yet, for my own part, I am heartily thankful that we are here. Notwithstanding the ungracious method of our introduction, we beg so much favour of you, as to be considered gentlemen for the present, and respecters of good manners; who desire nothing better than to make amends, by our timely ser-

vices, for an untimely intrusion. By your good leave, therefore, we will help to defend these ladies against the robbers,—and as we are men of honour, it shall be left to your own discretion, whether you will bestow them upon us hereafter."

As the young gentleman spoke this with an air of great modesty and sincerity, the Hidalgo thought fit to accept of the assistance that was offered; whereupon they began to consult together on the steps which should be adopted in such an extremity. Accordingly, it was concerted to send for the two traitorous servants, one by one, into the chamber, where, as soon as they entered, they were seized, and bound hand and foot before they could think of any resistance. The wretched men, finding themselves in this dreary plight, and that their lives were at command, began readily to confess all they knew of the plot; adding several particulars which had not been touched upon by Spinello. Amongst other news, it came out

that the banditti had deposited their arms in readiness in a certain hollow oak, which stood in the rear of the house; whereupon the Hidalgo made a vow, inwardly, to cut down that dangerous tree, as he had done before by the chestnuts.

It was towards midnight, when Spinello, with his comrades, approached for the execution of their design. The night was very boisterous, with frequent gusts of wind, that drove the low black clouds with great rapidity across the sky. Thus every now and then there was a short bright glance of the moon, followed, at a few minutes interval, by the most profound shadows; and, by the help of those snatches of light, the desperate Gines led on his fellows, who were about half a dozen in all, towards the hollow tree.

Now it happened, just as he came up, that a fresh cloud came over the face of the moon, so that the mark he aimed at was quite swallowed up in the gloom. Groping his way,

therefore, with his hands, he began to feel about the ragged stem for the entry to the magazine; but he had no sooner thrust his arms into the opening, than they were seized by some person who was concealed within the hollow trunk.

I know not whether Gines recalled, at this moment, his superstition about a tree, but he set up a loud yell of dismay. The Hidalgo, who lay close by in ambush, with his party, instantly discharged a well-aimed volley at the rest of the banditti, who finding themselves betrayed, and without arms, took at once to their heels, leaving two that were miserably wounded, upon the grass. By this time, Spinello, recovering his courage, made a desperate struggle to get away; but, before he could disengage his arms, the Hidalgo came up with his assistants, and the robber was quickly overcome and secured. Of the other two men, one was already dead, the bullet having lodged in his breast: as for the second, his leg-bone was broken by

a ball just above the ankle joint, and it happened that this was the very same rogue who had gossipped with Gines upon the chestnut-bough.

It was a dreadful sight to behold the countenance of the latter, when he was dragged into the chamber, and how he foamed and gnashed his teeth at the two desponding varlets, who had been double traitors, he supposed, to both masters. Although he was so securely bound, those wretched men could not look upon him without an extreme trembling; however, when he was informed of the true cause of the discovery, he raved no more, remarking only, to the other robber, that his misgiving about the chestnut tree had been justified by the event.

The Hidalgo repairing afterwards, with the two young gentlemen, into the presence of his two daughters, there ensued many compliments between them, and joyful congratulations on the conclusion of the danger. At last, the Hidalgo growing more and more pleased with

the graceful manners and conversation of his guests, his heart warmed towards them, and he began to wish that they were all but his sons.

"Gentlemen," he said, "a late welcome is better than none at all, and especially when it comes maturely from the heart. Pray accept of this apology for my tardiness, and for your great services I will try to make amends to you on the spot. Your gallantry and agreeable bearing persuade me that you are truly the honourable young persons that you have named to me; and I rejoice, therefore, for my own sake as well as yours, that my daughters remain at my disposal. If you are willing then, to accept of each other, I foresee no difficulties—that is to say, provided you can both agree in your election, as readily as my other two robbers."

It would be hard to declare whether the two ladies were most happy or confused by this unexpected proposal; they therefore made off, with fewer words than blushes, to their own

bedchamber; but the three gentlemen sat up together, for security, during the remainder of the night.

On the morrow the criminals were delivered to the proper authorities, and the process with such atrocious offenders being very summary, they were executed, before sunset, in divers places about the province. For the most part, they were suspended on lofty wooden gibbets; but the body of Spinello, in order to make the greater impression, was hung up on the very same Chestnut Tree that had led to his defeat.

THE

FAIR MAID OF LUDGATE.

O, she is sweeter than the rose
  Now bathed among the balmly rain ;
And I maun gang to yon town,
  And see the lovesome maid again.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

THE

FAIR MAID OF LUDGATE.

The reign of King Charles the Second of England was marked by two great public calamities: the first of them, that memorable Plague which devastated London; and then followed that deplorable Fire which destroyed such a large portion of the same devoted metropolis.

It happened shortly before the pestilence, that the King had a design to serve in the city; wherefore he rode that way on horseback, attended only by the Lord Rochester, and one or two gentlemen of the Court. As they were riding gently, in this manner, up the

hill of Ludgate, towards St. Paul's, the Earl observed that the King stopped short, and fixed his eyes on a certain casement on the right hand side of the way. The gentlemen, turning their heads in the same direction, immediately beheld a young and beautiful woman, in a very rich and fanciful dress, and worthy indeed of the admiration of the monarch; who, with sheer delight, stood as if rooted to the spot. The lady, for a while, did not observe this stoppage, so that the company of courtiers had full time to observe her countenance and dress. She wore upon her head a small cap of black velvet, which fitted very close, and came down with a point upon her forehead, where, at the peak of the velvet, there hung a very large pearl. Her hair, which was of an auburn colour and very abundant, fell down on either side of her face in large ringlets according to the fashion of the time, and clustered daintily about her fair neck and bosom, several of the locks, more-

over, being bound together here and there by clusters of fine pearls. As for her boddice, it was of white silk, with a goodly brooch of emeralds in the shape of strawberry leaves, which were held together by stalks of gold. Her sleeves, which were very wide, and hung loose from the elbow, were of the same silk; but there was a short under-sleeve of peach-blossom satin, that fastened with clasps of emerald about the mid-arm. Her bracelets were ornamented with the same gem; but the bands were of gold, as well as the girdle that encircled her waist. Thus much the company could perceive, as she leaned upon the edge of the window with one delicate hand: at last—for in the mean while she had been stedfastly looking abroad, as in a reverie—she recollected herself, and, observing that she was gazed at, immediately withdrew.

The King watched a minute or two at the window, after she was gone, like a man in a dream; and then, turning round to Rochester,

inquired if he knew any thing of the lady he had seen. The Earl replied instantly, that he knew nothing of her, except she was the loveliest creature that had ever feasted his eyes; whereupon the King commanded him to remain behind, and learn as many particulars as he could. The King, with the gentlemen, then rode on very thoughtfully into the city, where he transacted what he had to do, and then returned with the same company by Cheapside, where they encountered the Earl.

As soon as the King saw Rochester, he asked eagerly, "What news?" Whereupon the latter acquainted him with all he knew. "As for her name," he said, "she is called Alice, but her surname is swallowed up in that of The Fair Maid of Ludgate—for that is her only title in these parts. She is an only child, and her father is a rich jeweller; and so in faith was her mother likewise, to judge by this splendid sample of their workmanship."

"Verily I think so too," returned the Mo-

narch ; " she must come to Court," and with that they began to concert together how to prosecute that design.

And doubtless the Fair Maid of Ludgate would have been ensnared by the devices of that profligate courtier, but for an event that turned all thoughts of intrigue and human pleasure into utter despondency and affright. For now broke out that dreadful pestilence which soon raged so awfully throughout the great city, the mortality increasing from hundreds to thousands of deaths in a single week. At the first ravages of the infection, a vast number of families deserted their houses, and fled into the country ; the remainder enclosing themselves as rigidly within their own dwellings, as if they had been separately besieged by some invisible foe. In the mean time, the pestilence increased in fury, spreading from house to house, and from street to street, till whole parishes were subjected to its rage. At this point, the father of Alice fell sud-

denly ill, though not of the pest; however, the terrified domestics could not be persuaded otherwise, than that he was smitten by the plague, and accordingly they all ran off together, leaving him to the sole care of his afflicted child.

On the morning after this desertion, as she sate weeping at the bedside of her father, the Fair Maid heard a great noise of voices in the street; wherefore, looking forth at the front casement, she saw a number of youths, with horses ready saddled and bridled, standing about the door. As soon as she showed herself at the window they all began to call out together, beseeching her to come down, and fly with them from the city of death; which touched the heart of Alice very much: after thanking them, therefore, with her eyes full of tears, she pointed inwards, and told them that her father was unable to rise from his bed.

"Then there is no help for him," cried Hugh Percy. "God receive his soul! The plague is

striding hither very fast. I have seen the red crosses in Cheapside. Pray come down, therefore, unto us, dearest Alice, for we will wait on you to the ends of the earth."

The sorrowful Alice wept abundantly at this speech, and it was some minutes before she could make any answer.

"Hugh Percy," she said at last, "if it be as you say, the will of God be done; but I will never depart from the help of my dear father;" and with that, waiving her hand to them as a last farewell, she closed the casement, and returned to the sick-chamber.

On the morrow the gentle youths came again to the house on the same errand, but they were fewer than before. They moved Alice by their outcries to come at last to the window, who replied in the same way to their entreaties, notwithstanding the fond youths continued to use their arguments, with many prayers to her, to come down, but she remained constant in her denial; at length, missing some of the num-

ber, she inquired for Hugh Percy, and they answered dejectedly, that he had sickened of the plague that very morn.

"Alas! gentle kind friends," she cried, "let this be your warning, and depart hence in good time. It will make me miserable for ever to be answerable for your mischances; as for myself, I am resigned entirely to the dispensation of God." And with these words she closed the window, and the melancholy youths went away slowly, except one, who had neither brought any horse with him, nor joined in the supplications of the rest. The disconsolate Alice, coming afterwards to the window for air, beheld him thus standing with his arms folded against the door.

"How is this, Ralph Seaton, that you still linger about this melancholy place?"

"Gentle Alice," returned Seaton, "I have not come hither like the others, to bid you fly away from hence; neither must you bid me depart against my will."

"Ralph Seaton, my heart is brim-full of thanks to you for this tenderness towards me; but you have a mother and sister for your care."

"They are safe, Alice, and far from this horrible place."

"Would to God you were with them! dear Ralph Seaton, begone; and the love you bear towards me set only at a distance in your prayers. I wish you a thousand farewells, in one word—but pray begone." And with that, turning away, with one hand over her eyes, she closed the casement with the other, as if for ever and ever.

The next morning the young men came for the third time to the house, and there was a red cross but a few doors off. The youths were now but three or four in number, several having betaken themselves to the country in despair, and others had been breathed upon by the life-wasting pestilence. It was a long while before Alice came to the window, so that their hearts began to sink with dread, for they made

sure that she was taken ill. However, she came forth to them at last, in extreme distress, to see them so wilful for her sake.

"For the dear love of God!" she cried, "do not come thus any more, unless you would break my heart! Lo! the dreadful signal of death is at hand, and to-morrow it may be set upon this very door. Do not cause the curses of your friends and parents to be heaped hereafter on my miserable head. If you have any pity for me in your hearts, pray let this be the uttermost farewell between us."

At these words, the sad youths began to shed tears; and some of them, with a broken voice, begged of her to bestow on them some tokens for a remembrance. Thereupon she went for her bracelets, and after kissing them, gave them between two of the young men. To a third she cast her glove, but to Seaton she dropped a ring, which she had pressed sundry times to her lips.

The day after the final departure of the young men, the ominous red cross was marked on the jeweller's door; for, as he was known to be ill, it was supposed, of course, that his malady was the plague. In consequence the door was rigorously nailed up, so that no one could pass in or out, and moreover there were watchmen appointed for the same purpose of blockade. It was the duty of these attendants to see that the people within the suspected houses were duly supplied with provision; whereas, by the negligence of these hard-hearted men, it happened frequently that the persons confined within perished of absolute want. Thus it befel, after some days, that Alice saw her father relapsing again, for the lack of mere necessaries to support him in his weakness, his disorder having considerably abated. In this extremity, seeing a solitary man in the street, she stretched out her arms towards him, and besought him for the love of God to bring a little food;

but the bewildered man, instead of understanding, bade her "flee from the wrath to come," and with sundry leaps and frantic gestures, went capering on his way.

Her heart at this disappointment was ready to burst with despair; but, turning her eyes towards the opposite side, she perceived another man coming down the street, with a pitcher and a small loaf. As soon as he came under the window, she made the same prayer to him as to the former, begging him for charity, and the sake of her dear father, to allow him but a sup of the water and a small morsel of the bread.

"It is for that purpose," said the other, "that I am come." And as he looked upward she discovered that it was Seaton, who had brought this very timely supply. "You may eat and drink of these," he continued, "without any suspicion, for they come from a place many miles hence, where the infection is yet unknown."

The heart of Alice was too full to let her reply, but she ran forthwith, and fetched a

cord, to draw up the loaf and the pitcher withal, the last being filled with good wine. When her father had finished his repast, which revived him very much, she returned with the pitcher, and let it down by the cord to Seaton, who perceived something glittering within the vessel.

"Ralph Seaton," she said, "wear that jewel for my sake. The blessing of God be ever with you in return for this precious deed! but I conjure you, by the Holy Trinity, do not come hither again."

The generous Seaton, with great joy placed the brooch within his bosom, and with a signal of farewell to Alice, departed without another word. And now her heart began to sink again to think of the morrow, when assuredly her beloved parent would be reduced to the like extremity; for during all this time the negligent watchmen had never come within sight of the house. All the night hours she spent, therefore, in anguish and dread, which were still

more aggravated by the dismal rumbling of the carts, that at midnight were used to come about for the corpses of the dead.

In the middle of the night one of these coarse slovenly hearses, with a cargo of dead bodies, passed through the street, attended by a bellman and some porters, with flaming torches, unto whom the miserable Alice called out with a lamentable voice. The men, at her summons, came under the window with the cart, expecting some dead body to be cast out to them, the mortality admitting of no more decent rites; but when they heard what she wanted, they replied sullenly, that they had business enough of their own to convey away all the carrion,—and so passed on with their horrible chimes.

The morning was spent in the same alternations of fruitless hope and despair,—till towards noon, when Seaton came again with the pitcher and a small basket, which contained some cold baked meat, and other eatables, that he had procured with infinite pains from a

country place, at a considerable distance. The fair maiden drew up these supplies with great eagerness, her father beginning now to have that appetite which is one of the first symptoms of recovery from any sickness; accordingly he fed upon the victuals with great relish. The gentle Alice, in the meanwhile, lowered down the empty basket and the pitcher to Seaton, and then again besought him not to expose himself to such risks by coming into the city; to which he made no answer but by pressing his hands against his bosom, as if to express that such errands gratified his heart; whereupon she made fresh signs to say farewell, and he departed.

In this manner several weeks passed away, the gallant youth never failing to come day after day with fresh provision, till at last the old jeweller was able to sit up. The gracious Providence preserved them all, in the meantime, from any attack of the Pestilence, though many persons died every day, on both sides of the

street, the distemper being at its worst pitch. Thus the houses became desolate, and the streets silent, and beginning to look green even, by the springing up of grass between the untrodden stones.

The prison-house of the Fair Maid of Ludgate and her father soon became, therefore, very irksome, and especially when the latter got well enough to stir about, and to behold through the window these symptoms of the public calamity, which filled him with more anxiety than he had ever felt, on account of his dear child, whose life was not secure, any more than his own, for a single hour. His alarm and disquiet on this account threatening to bring on a relapse of his malady, the tender girl found but little happiness in his recovery, which seemed thus to have been altogether in vain. And truly, it was a sufficient grief for any one to be in the centre, though unhurt, of such a horrible devastation; whereof none could guess at the continuance, whether it would cease

of its own accord, or rage on till there were no more victims to be destroyed.

The plague, however, abated towards the close of the year, when the King, who had removed with his court to Windsor in the midst of the alarm, felt disposed one day to pay a visit to the metropolis. Accordingly, mounting on horseback, he rode into town, accompanied by the Lord Rochester, and the same gentlemen who had been his attendants on the former occasion.

The monarch was naturally much shocked at the desolate aspect of the place, which, from a great and populous city, had become almost a desert; the sound of the horses' hoofs echoing dismally throughout the solitary streets, but bringing very few persons to look out at the windows, and of those, the chief part were more like lean ghastly ghosts than human living creatures. In consequence he rode along in a very melancholy mood of mind, which the pleasant Earl endeavoured to enliven by various witty jests

but without any effect, for they sounded hollow and untimely, even in his own ear.

At last arriving at the Hill of Ludgate, and the image of the Fair Maid coming to his remembrance, the King looked towards the house; and lo! there frowned the horrible red cross, which was still distinct upon the door. Immediately he pointed out this deadly signal to Rochester, who had already noticed it, and then both shook their heads, meaning to say that she was dead; however, to make certain, the Earl alighted, and knocked with all his might at the door. But there was no answer, nor any appearance of a face at any window. Thereupon, with very heavy hearts, they rode onwards for a few doors farther, where there was a young man, like a spectre, sitting at an open casement, with a large book like a bible in his hands. The King, who spied him first, asked of him very eagerly, whether the Fair Maid of Ludgate was alive or dead, but the

ghostly man could tell nothing of the matter, except that the Jeweller had been the very first person to be seized by the plague in their quarter. Thereupon the King made up his mind that the fair Alice had perished amongst the many thousand victims of the pest, and with a very sorrowful visage he rode on, through the city, where he spent some hours in noticing the deplorable consequences of that visitation.

Afterwards, he returned with his company by the same way, and when they came towards the jeweller's house, in Ludgate, there were several young men standing about the door. They had been knocking to obtain tidings of the Fair Maid, but without any better success than before; so that getting very impatient, they began, as the King came up, to cast stones through the windows. The Earl of Rochester, seeing them at this vain work, called out as he passed,

"Gentlemen, you are wasting your labour! The divinity of your city is dead; as you may know, by asking of the living skeleton at yonder casement."

At these words, the young men, supposing that the Earl had authority for what he said, desisted from their attempts, and the two companies went each their several ways; the King, with his attendants, to Windsor, and the sad youths to their homes, with grief on all their faces, and very aching hearts, through sorrow for the Fair Maid of Ludgate.

As for the gallant Ralph Seaton, he had ceased to come beneath the window for some time before, since there was no longer any one living within the house to drink from his pitcher, or to eat out of his basket. Notwithstanding, he continued now and then to bring a few pieces of game, and sometimes a flask also, to the father of Alice, who lived under the same roof, for the elder Seaton was a good

yeoman of Kent, and thither Ralph had conveyed the old citizen as soon as he was well enough to be removed. The old Jeweller outlived the Plague by a score of years; but the Fair Maid of Ludgate, who had survived the pestilence, was carried off shortly afterwards by marriage, the title which had belonged to her in the city being resolved into that of the Dame Alice Seaton.

THE THREE BROTHERS.

——— Now confess and know,
Wit without money sometimes gives the blow.

VALENTINE.

THE THREE BROTHERS.

ABENDALI of Bagdad had three sons; the two eldest, very tall and proper youths for their years; but the youngest, on account of the dwarfishness of his stature, was called Little Agib. He had, notwithstanding, a wit and shrewdness very unusual to any, especially of his childish age; whereas his brothers were dull and slow of intellect, to an extraordinary degree.

Now Abendali, though he had money, was not rich enough to leave behind him a competence for each of his sons; wherefore he thought it best to teach them in the first instance to scrape together as much as they could; accordingly, calling them all to him,

on some occasion, he presented to each a small canvass purse, with a sequin in it, by way of handsel, and then spoke to them to this effect:

"Behold! here is a money-bag a-piece, with a single sequin, for you must furnish the rest by your own industry. I shall require every now and then to look into your purses, in order to see what you have added; but to that end you shall not have any recourse to theft, or violent robbery, for money is often purchased by those methods at too dear a rate; whereas the more you can obtain by any subtle stratagems, or smart strokes of policy, the greater will be my opinion of your hopefulness and abilities."

The three brethren accepted of the purses with great good-will, and immediately began to think over various plans of getting money; so quickly does the desire of riches take root in the human bosom. The two elder ones, however, beat about their wits to no purpose, for they could not start a single invention, except of begging alms, which they would not

descend to; whereas the Little Agib added another piece of money to his sequin before the setting of the sun.

It happened that there lived at some distance from Abendali an old lady, who was bed-ridden, but very rich, and a relation of the former, though at some degrees removed. As she was thus lying in her chamber, she heard the door open, and Agib came in, but he was so little that he could not look upon the bed. The lady asking who it was, he answered, and said, "My name is Little Agib, and I am sent here by my father, your kinsman, who is called Abendali; for he desires to know how you are, and to wish you a thousand years."

The old lady wondered very much that Abendali was so much concerned for her, since they had not held any correspondence together for a long while; however, she was very well satisfied with his attention, and gave a small piece of money to Agib, desiring the slaves moreover to bring him as many sweetmeats as he liked. The

brethren showing their purses at night to their father, the two eldest had only their sequin apiece, whereas little Agib had thus added already to his store.

On the following day, little Agib paid another visit to the sick lady, and was as well treated as before. He repeated the same compliments very many times afterwards, adding continually fresh monies in his purse; at last, Abendali, passing by chance in the same quarter of the city, took it into his head to inquire for his kinswoman; and when he entered her chamber, lo! there sat little Agib behind the door. As soon as he had delivered his compliments, which the lady received very graciously, she pointed to little Agib, and said she had taken it very kindly that the child had been sent so often to ask after her health.

"Madam," said Abendali, who laughed all the while; "the little liar has not told you one word of truth. I know well enough why he came here; which was on none of my errands."

The Little Agib prudently held his peace till his father was gone; whereupon the old lady asked him how he could be so wicked as to deceive her with such multiplied lies.

"Alas!" said Agib, pretending to whimper very much, "I hope God will not punish me with a sore tongue for such sinning. It is true, as my father says, that he never commanded me to come; but I was so scandalized at his shocking neglect, that I could not help calling upon you of my own accord, and making up those messages in his name."

The old lady hereupon was so much touched with the seeming piety and tenderness of Little Agib, that she bade him climb upon the bed and kiss her, which he performed; and because he had come so disinterestedly, and not, she believed, for the trifling pieces of money, she gave him a coin of more value, to make amends, as she said, for Abendali's injurious suspicion.

The same night, when he looked in Agib's purse, the old man saw that he had three pieces

more; at which he nodded, as if to say I know where these came from: whereupon Agib, being concerned for the honour of his ingenuity, spoke up to his father. "It is not," said he, "as you suppose; these two pieces I obtained elsewhere, than at the place you are thinking of;" and with that he appealed to his brethren.

"It is truth," said the eldest, "what he speaks. Observing that he had every night a fresh piece of money, whereas we that are his elders could get nothing at all, myself and my brother besought of Little Agib to acquaint us with his secret for making gold and silver; but he would not part with it, unless we gave him our two pieces, and thus we have no money whatever."

With that the elder brothers turned both at once on Little Agib, calling him a liar and a cheat; for that, when they called on the old lady, instead of giving them a piece of money or two, as he had reported, she said that she

knew what they came for, and withal bade them to be thrust forth from the chamber.

During this relation, Abendali could not help laughing secretly at the cunning of Little Agib, who had thus added his brother's money to his own; however, he quieted the two elder ones, by declaring that Agib had told them the truth.

About a month after this time, the Angel of Death called upon Abendali, and touching him on the right side, bade him prepare to die. Accordingly the old man sent for his sons to his bedside, and after embracing them tenderly one by one, spoke as follows:

"My dear children, you will find all the money that I have in the world in a great earthen pot, which stands in a hole of the wall, behind the head of my couch. As for its disposal my will is this, that it shall be equally divided between you two, who are the eldest. As for Little Agib, he has wit enough to provide for himself, and must shift as he can."

With these words he died, and the sons turned his face towards the East,—the two eldest setting themselves immediately to divide the money between them, in order to divert their grief; whereas Little Agib, having nothing to do, shed a great many tears. However, it happened so, that the soul of the infirm kinswoman of Abendali took flight to God the same evening, and she left by her will a sum of money, that made Agib equal in means with his brethren; whereupon, having something likewise to occupy his thoughts, his eyes were soon as dry as the others.

After a decent season, the three brothers, desiring a change of scene, and to see a little of the world, determined to travel: accordingly, bestowing their money about their persons, they set forth in company, intending to go towards Damascus; but, before they had gone very far, they were set upon by a band of thieves, who took away all they had. The two elder ones, at this mischance, were very

much cast down; but Little Agib, who was no worse off than he had been left by his father, kept up his heart. At last they came to a town, where Agib, who never had any mistrust of his wit, took care to hire a small house without any delay; but his brethren were very much dismayed at so rash an act, for they knew that there was not a coin amongst them all. Notwithstanding, Agib, by several dexterous turns, made shift to provide something every day to eat and drink, which he shared generously with the others, exacting from them only a promise that they would help him whenever they could.

At last even the inventions of Little Agib began to fail, and he was walking through the streets in a very melancholy manner, when he espied an old woman making over towards an artificer's with a brazen pan in her arms. A thought immediately came into his head: therefore, stopping the woman before she could step into the shop, and drawing her a

little way apart, he spoke thus. "I doubt not, my good mother, that you were going to the brazier, to have that vessel repaired, and I should be loth to stop the bread from coming to any honest man's mouth. Notwithstanding, I have not eaten for three days;" here the little hypocrite began to shed tears;—"and as I know something of the craft, if you will allow me to do such a small job for you, it will be a great charity."

The old woman, in reply, told him that she was indeed going to the brazier's on such an errand, but nevertheless, the vessel having a flaw at the bottom, she was very well disposed to let him repair her pan, as it would be an act of charity, and especially as he would no doubt mend it for half-price. The Little Agib agreed to her terms; whereupon leading her to the door of his house, he took the pan from her, and desired her to call again in a certain time.

The brethren wondered very much to

see Agib with such a vessel, when they had not provision to make it of any use; but he gave them no hint of his design, requiring only of them that they would go abroad, and raise money upon such parts of their raiment as they could spare. The two elder ones, having a great confidence in his cleverness, did as they were desired, but the greater part of their clothes having been pledged in the same way, they could borrow but two pieces for their turbans, which were left as security.

As soon as he got the money, Agib ran off to the brazier, who has been mentioned before, and ordered him to repair the brass pan in his best manner, and without any delay, which the man punctually fulfilled. Thereupon Agib made him a present of the two pieces, which amounted to much more than the usual charge for such a job, and made haste home with the pan, where he arrived but a breathing space before the old woman knocked at the door. She was very much pleased with the work, for

the pan had a brave new bottom, perfectly water-tight, and neatly set in; but the moderate charge that was demanded by Agib delighted her still more, wherefore she began to hobble off, with great satisfaction in her countenance, when he beckoned to her to come back.

"There is but one thing," said he, "that I request of you, which is this; that you will not mention this matter to any one, for otherwise, as I am not a native of the place, I shall have all the braziers of the town about my ears."

The old woman promised readily to observe his caution; notwithstanding, as he had foreseen, she told the story to every one of her neighbours, and the neighbours gossiped of it to others, so that the fame of the cheap brazier travelled through the whole of her quarter. Thereupon, every person who had a vessel of brass or copper, or a metal pan of any kind that was unsound, resolved to have it mended at so reasonable a rate; and each one intend-

ing to be beforehand with the others, it fell out, that a great mob came all at once to the door.

As soon as Agib heard the knocking, and the voices, and the jangling of the vessels, for the good people made a pretty concert without, in order to let him know what they wanted, he turned about to his brothers, and said that the time for their usefulness was arrived. Thereupon he opened the door, and saw a great concourse of people, who were all talking together, and holding up towards him the bottoms of kettles and pans. Whenever he could make himself heard through the clamour, he desired every one to make a private mark of their own upon the metal, which being done, he took in the articles one by one, and appointed with the owners to return for them on the morrow at the same hour.

The things which had been brought made a goodly heap in the chamber, being piled up in one corner to the very top of the room, a sight

that amused Agib and his brothers very much, for the latter made sure that they were to sell the whole of the metal, and then make off with the money, which was quite contrary to the policy of Agib, who remembered the injunctions of Abendali, as to the danger of such acts. However, there was no time to be wasted, having such a quantity of work before their eyes; accordingly, bidding his brothers perform after his example, Agib sat down on the floor with one of the brazen vessels between his legs, and by help of an old knife and some coarse sand, scraped and scoured the bottom till it looked very bright and clean. The two eldest laboured after the same manner with great patience, and persevered so stedfastly, that by daylight the bottoms of the vessels were all shining as brilliantly as the sun. "Now," said Agib, "we may lie down and rest awhile, for we have done the work of a score of hands."

At the time appointed, which was about noon, the people came in a crowd, as before, to

fetch away their pans, every one striving to be first at the door. In the mean time, Agib had the vessels heaped up behind him, so as to be conveniently within reach; whereupon, opening the door, and holding up one of the articles in his right hand, one of the crowd called out, "That is my pan!" Immediately Agib reached forth the vessel to the owner, and without a word stretched out his left hand for the money, which in every case was a piece of the same amount that had been paid by the old woman; and his two brothers, who stood behind with blacked faces, to look like furnacemen, put all the coins into a bag. In this way, Agib, as fast as he could, delivered all the things to the people; who, as soon as they saw the bright bottoms of their pots and kettles, were well satisfied, and withal very much amazed to think that so much work had been performed in such a little space.

"It is wonderful! it is wonderful!" they said to each other; "he must have a hundred work-

people in his house !" and with that and similar sayings they departed to their homes.

When the last of the pot-bearers was gone out of sight, Agib told his brothers that it was time for them to leave the place; whereupon the dull-witted pair began to think of redeeming their turbans, and, in spite of the entreaties of Agib, being very obstinate, as such thick-skulls usually are, they went forth on that errand. In the interval, Agib, who had many misgivings at heart, was obliged to remain in the house; so that the event fell out as unhappily as might have been foretold. In a little while, some of the people, who had paid for the mending of their pans, found out the trick, and these telling the others that were in the same plight, they repaired suddenly to the house, before Agib had time to escape, and carried him into the presence of the Cadi.

The furious people told their story all at once, as they could, to the judge; and withal they held up so many shining pan-bottoms, of

brass as well as copper, that he was quite dazzled, and almost as blind as Justice ought to be, according to the painters. Many of them, besides, to eke out their speech, laid sundry violent thumps upon the twanging vessels, so that such an uproar had never been heard before in the court. As for Agib, though he felt his case to be somewhat critical, he could not help laughing at the oddness of the scene; and there were others in the hall, who laughed more violently than he.

It was a common thing with the Caliph of Bagdad to go in disguise through his dominions, as well to overlook the administration of justice in different places, as for his own private diversion. Thus it happened at this moment, that the Caliph was standing, unrecognized, amongst the spectators of the scene. He laughed very heartily at the eagerness of the complainants and their whimsical concert. At last, sending his royal signet to the Cadi, with a message that it was his pleasure to try

the cause himself, he went up into the judge's seat.

As soon as the accusers perceived the Caliph, they set up a new clamour, and a fresh clatter of their pans, so that he had much ado to preserve his gravity and his eyesight. However, when he had heard enough to comprehend the matter, he commanded them to hold their peace, and then called upon Agib to say what he could in his defence.

"Commander of the Faithful!" said Agib, "I beseech but your gracious patience, and I will answer all this rabble, and their kettles to boot. Your majesty must know then, that yesterday morning these people all made even such a tumult about my door as you have just heard. As soon as ever I came forth, they held up the bottoms of their vessels one and all towards me, as they have just done to your majesty; and if the Commander of the Faithful understands by that action that he is to

mend all the bottoms of their pans, I confess that I am worthy of the bastinado."

The Caliph laughed more heartily than ever at this idea of Agib's, in which he was joined by all the unconcerned parties in the court; whereas the pan-bearers looked very much disconcerted. At last, one of them, speaking in behalf of the rest, besought of the Caliph that the old woman might be sent for, whose pot had been mended by Agib, and accordingly an officer was dispatched to bring her to the court. As soon as she came, the Cadi interrogated her, by the command of the Caliph, as to her transaction with Agib; whereupon she related the whole affair, and proved that he had undertaken, by express words, to put a new bottom to her pan.

The Caliph was very much vexed at this turn of the case against Agib, whereas the complainants were altogether in exultation, and asked eagerly and at once of the old woman,

whether her pan was not merely scrubbed bright at the bottom, and unserviceable, like theirs. The old woman, however, declared that it was no such matter, but that her pan was quite water-tight, and repaired with a new bottom in a workmanlike manner; whereupon the vessel being examined, it was discovered that she had told the truth.

The Caliph, who was overjoyed at this favourable result, now laughed again till he was ready to fall out of his seat. Whereas, the pan-bearers fell into a fresh fit of rage, shaking their clanking utensils first at the old woman, and then at Agib, and at last at each other, every one shifting the blame of the failure from himself to his neighbour, who had prevented the cause from being properly heard. In the mean time, all the braziers and metal-workers of the place, who had heard of the subject of the examination, thronged into the court; and began to treat with the enraged people who had been juggled for the repairs of

their pans: and these men falling into dispute with each other, there arose a fresh uproar. The Cadi, therefore, would fain have had them all thrust out of the place, but the Caliph desired that the rioters might have their way for a little longer, not doubting that some fresh mirth would arise out of the squabble. Accordingly, before long, the complainants came forward with a fresh accusation against the artificers, that under pretence of examining the vessels, they had thrust fresh holes in them, and withal they flourished the damaged pan-bottoms once more in the eyes of the Commander of the Faithful.

Little Agib, in the mean time, enjoyed this uproar in his sleeve, and casting a sly glance or two towards the seat of justice, he soon perceived that it was not more displeasing to the Caliph. The latter, after laughing a while longer, put on a grave look by force, and commanded Agib to relate what passed with the people, at the delivery of their wares.

"Sire," replied Agib, "as soon as I had got all the pans together, which were thus forced as it were upon me, I examined them as narrowly as I could; but not being a brazier, nor knowing any thing whatever of that trade, I could perceive only that they wanted a little scouring, which I performed by the help of my two brothers. This morning the people came again for their pots and pans, and seeing that they had only held up the bottoms towards me, in like manner I only held up the bottoms towards them; wherewith they were so well contented, that each gave me a small piece of money, without any demand on my part, and they went on their way."

As soon as Agib had concluded these words, he was silent; whereupon one of the braziers pushed his way through the crowd, and making his reverence before the Caliph, spoke as follows:—

"Commander of the Faithful, what this young man has said is every word of it true. As for

any sort of copper or brass work, he is quite ignorant of the craft, for the very morning before this, he brought to me a pan of his own to be repaired. By his desire, therefore, I put in a bran new bottom, for which he paid me very honestly as well as handsomely, so that I wish I had many more such liberal customers. As for these foolish people that make such a clatter, they are not worthy to be believed for an instant; for I leave it to your Majesty to consider whether so many bottoms as they speak of could be put into their vessels by all the braziers in the place, in the course of a single night. The thing is impossible; and besides, if it could be done, there is no man alive that could do such a job conscientiously, under ten times the price which they confess to have paid to him. I am a judge and ought to know."

The Caliph was very much diverted with this speech of the brazier, which made all the disconcerted pan-bearers hang down their heads. He then turned round to the Cadi and

asked what he thought of the case; the latter having given his answer, the crier was commanded to procure silence in the court, and the Caliph stood up to give judgment.

"Your observation," said he, turning towards the Cadi, "is both learned and just. I am of opinion, likewise, that the holding up of the bottoms of brazen pans, is not amongst any of the known forms of agreement. Thus there was no legal bargain on either side,"—and at these words the disappointed people, raising up their hands towards the Prophet in appeal against the injustice of the Caliph, there arose a new flashing of brass and copper bottoms, and a fresh clatter of all the pans.

"Notwithstanding," continued the Caliph, "as there seems to have been some evasion of a secret understanding between the two parties, my decree therefore is this, that the criminal shall receive two hundred strokes upon the soles of his feet;" and herewith, the hands fall-

ing down again with satisfaction, there ensued a fresh clanking chorus throughout the hall.

"However," the Caliph went on thus, as soon as there was silence—"it is necessary that justice on both sides should be equal and complete; wherefore, as the complainants did but hold up their pans, and then reckon that the order for the new bottoms was distinct, so it shall be sufficient for the executioner to lift up his arm two hundred times, and the criminal shall be deemed to have suffered as many stripes of the bastinado."

At this pleasant decision, there was a great shout of applause in the court; but the discomfited pan-bearers departed in great dudgeon, with more clangour than ever; and almost in a temper to hang up their pans, like the kettles of the Turkish Janizaries, as the signals for a revolt.

As for Agib, he suffered the penalty, according to his sentence; but the Caliph was so much

delighted with his wit and address, that before long he raised him to be one of his Ministers of State. The two elder ones, on the contrary, being very dull and slow, howbeit very proper men, rose no higher than to be soldiers of the Body Guard. Thus the expectation of Abendali was fulfilled, the Little Agib, though last in birth and least in stature, becoming the foremost in fortune and the highest in dignity of the Three Brothers.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET-STREET.